HORSE ILLUSTRATED's
30 MOST POPULAR **BREED PROFILES**

Best of BREEDS

VOL. 5

SPECIAL
COLLECTOR'S
ISSUE

THE *Ultimate* PORTFOLIO
from **AKHAL-TEKE**
to **WELSH PONY**

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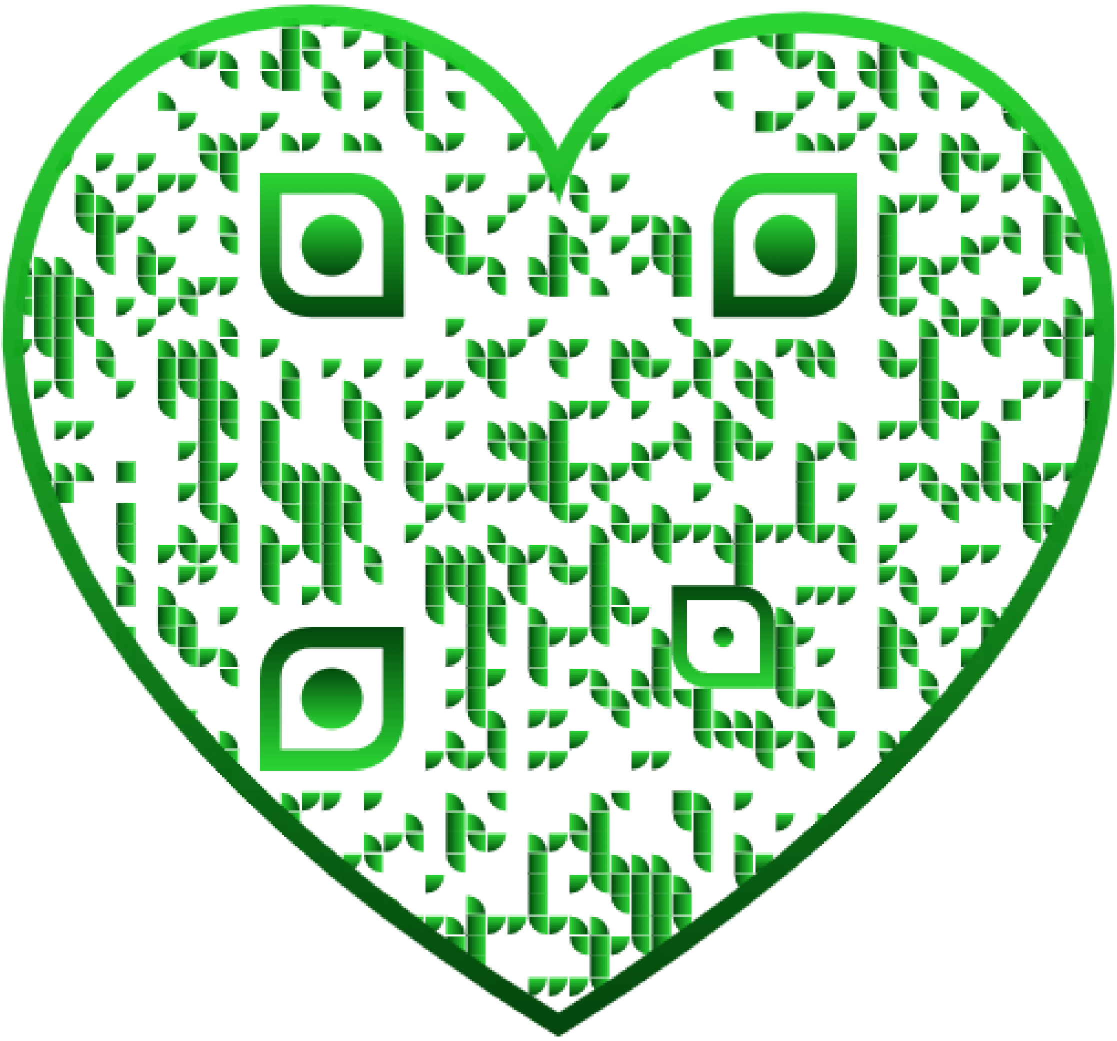

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A Horse for Everyone

Many horse breeds have come across my path over the years. I've had the pleasure of being owned by an Appendix Quarter Horse, an Appaloosa, an American Warmblood, and several off-track Thoroughbreds. Right now, I lease an Arabian (that's us above). I've vaulted on a Belgian, barrel raced on a Morgan, and trail ridden on a Tennessee Walking Horse.

Every breed has amazing and unique qualities that are cherished by the breeders and owners that choose to make it a part of their lives. Perhaps you own one of the breeds featured inside, or maybe you're simply an admirer of all things horse. Either way, in this fifth edition of *Best of Breeds*, we invite you to enjoy a journey through our newly refreshed, hand-picked photos and profiles of the breeds featured within these pages.

Each article originally appeared in the pages of *Horse Illustrated* magazine. Of course, we aren't able to feature every breed, or even every breed that has been profiled in *HI*. But we've carefully selected 30 of the most popular profiles we've ever published to offer a well-rounded anthology of draft horses, gaited breeds, sport horses, stock breeds, ponies, and a few rare breeds for a dash of something different.

In each profile, you'll find fascinating history and a bit about what makes each breed unique. Whether you ride, drive, or simply prefer to admire, we hope you enjoy learning something new, or perhaps even discover a new favorite breed.

– Holly Caccamise, Editor in Chief

Editorial

Editor in Chief Holly Caccamise

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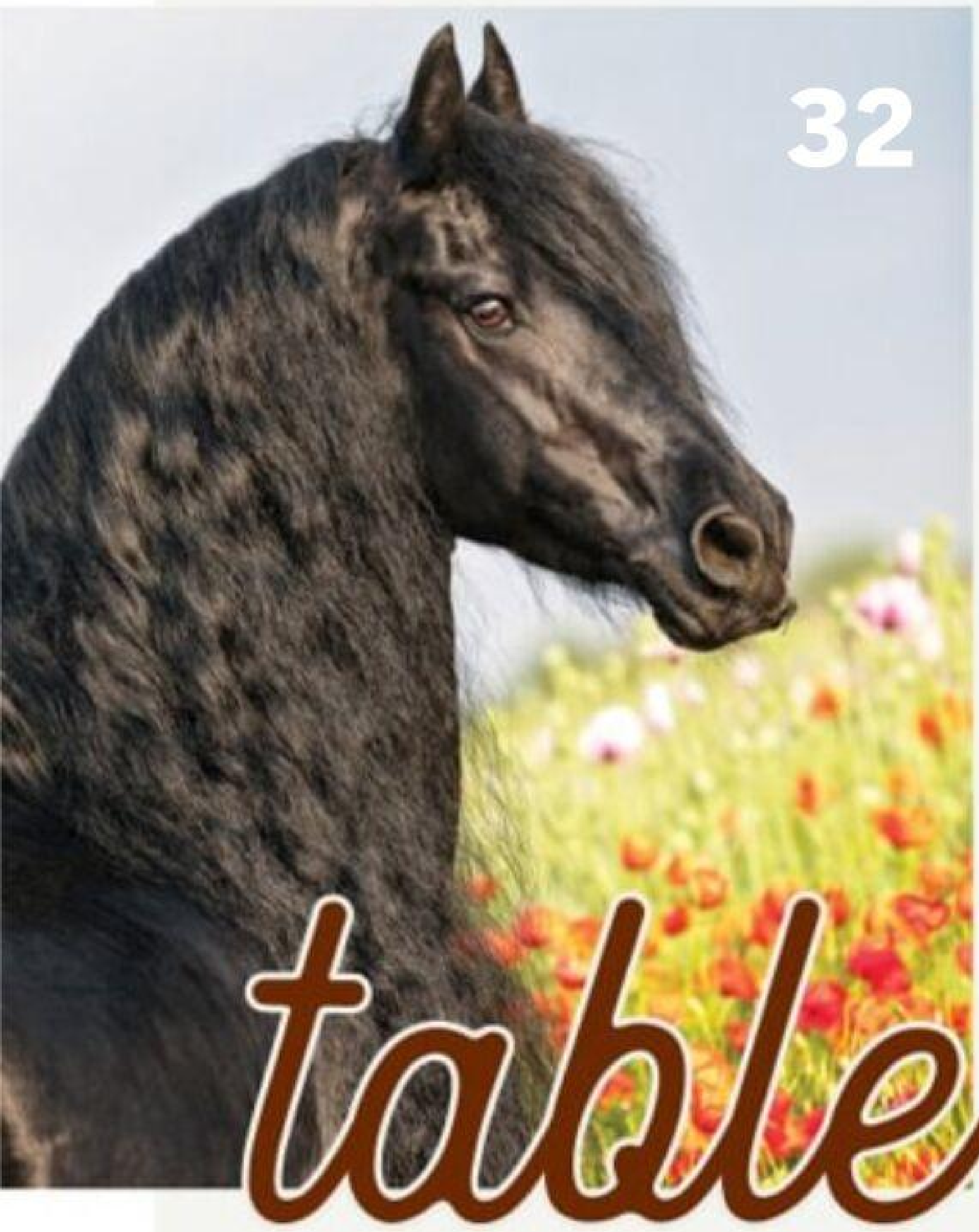

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LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRISTIANE SLAWIK; CHRISTIANE SLAWIK; MARK J. BARRETT/ADOBE STOCK; CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

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COVER: Norwegian Fjord,
photo by Christiane Slawik

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Akhal-Teke

This ancient breed continues to delight enthusiasts with its athletic accomplishments, intelligence, and signature golden gleam.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

The Akhal-Teke horse—pronounced like “apple” with a K instead of the P’s, and “techie”—is one of the rarest horse breeds in the world. Originally from Turkmenistan, the breed is over 4,000 years old. Their closed stud book has been held in Russia since 1932.

GRC PHOTOGRAPHY

The Akhal-Teke Association of America (ATAA) runs the North American registry in partnership with the stud book. They register both pure and part-breds, and currently have over 400 registered.

The breed is known for its stamina, intelligence, athleticism, and of course that incredible metallic sheen to their coat. Another unique characteristic is the Akhal-Teke "glide" gait, which is a smooth, fast trot. They were also one of the foundation horses for the Thoroughbred breed.

One Akhal-Teke, a black stallion named Absent, won four Olympic medals in dressage with two different riders at three different Olympic Games during the 1960s.

Today, owners of the breed continue to admire this incredibly rare and beautiful horse for its amazing attributes.

UP-AND-COMING RIDER PROGRAM

To encourage owners of Akhal-Tekes to promote the breed, the ATAA has an Up-and-Coming Rider program that gives grants to owners who want to compete and/or attend high-profile exhibitions with their horse. Grants range from $500 to $5,000.

Kathy Thode met her first Akhal-Teke in 2017 at a friend's farm.

Sabine Desper eventing with the stallion Adamek, who was made into a Breyer model.

“I actually had no interest in buying one, and only wanted to visit my friend, who had just moved back to the area,” says Thode. “She was bringing nine Akhal-Tekes with her. She told me all about them and I was very intrigued.” She ended up purchasing Kazimir, a 16.2-hand chestnut, from her friend.

Kazimir and Thode have received two grants in 2021 and 2022, which went toward costs of competition and to attend the Columbus Ohio Equine Affair. The two compete in dressage, where Kazimir excels. On their off time, he also is a trusted trail mount.

Q2 PHOTOGRAPHY

The 16.2-hand gelding Kazimir excels in dressage but is also a trusted trail mount.

“What amazes me about this breed is their calm and relaxed manner out in nature and their ability to focus on the job at hand, no matter what it might entail,” says Thode.

A BREYER MODEL

Akhal-Teke stallion Adamek was awarded the USDF All Breeds Dressage award in 2022 and was chosen to be a Breyer model in that same year. Sabine Desper first started riding Adamek when she worked at Shenandoah Farm in Staunton, Va. After 10 years, the farm was dispersed upon the passing of its owner, Phil Case.

Now owned by the Akhal-Teke Foundation, she feels fortunate she gets to continue to be his rider.

“I love riding Adamek for so many reasons,” says Desper. “He is such a willing partner and always tries his hardest, even when things don’t come easy. His gaits are very comfortable, which is always an advantage in dressage. He is always happy to get ready for a ride or to load up in the trailer to go places.” HI

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 14.3-16 hands

COLOR: Black, smoky cream, bay, buckskin, perlino, cremello, chestnut, palomino, gray.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Head long and narrow; ears long, slim and set forward. Neck is long, slim and set high out of the shoulder. Back is long with a level topline. Withers are prominent.

ASSOCIATION: Akhal-Teke Association of America
www.akhal-teke.org

American CREAM DRAFT

Dedicated Cream Draft fans are working to keep America's only native draft breed around.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

In the early 1900s, a uniquely colored cream mare named Old Granny consistently threw cream-colored foals that caught the eyes of farmers in Story County, Iowa. In 1932, her impressive great-great-grandson, Silver Lace, helped to further people's interest in these unique light draft horses that are known for their cream coats, pink skin, amber eyes and white manes and tails.

The American Cream Draft Horse Association (ACDHA) was formed soon after in 1944 by Clarence T. Rierson under the name American Cream Horse of America Association with 75 horses. By 1957, the association had doubled its membership and had almost 200 horses registered. It seemed like the breed was well on its way.

Unfortunately, the advent of heavy machinery made the market for draft horses sharply decline, and the new breed just couldn't get its footing. Since then, the breed has struggled to survive, with the ACDHA going inactive for more than 14 years.

A BREED WORTH SAVING

Still, a few people kept the Creams alive by holding on to their stock. In 1982, the ACDHA was reorganized with the help of the University of Kentucky Equine Blood Typing Lab, which affirmed the breed's genes.

Since then, the breed continues to have low numbers. The Livestock Conservancy has them listed on their priority list as critical, meaning they have fewer than 200 annual registrations in the U.S., and an estimated global population of less than 5,000.

Currently, there are fewer than 500 registered American Cream Drafts in the ACDHA. But staunch breeders and fans of the breed are not ready to give up on their Creams.

"As a breeder standing a stallion, a few other stud owners and I have been offering free or reduced stud service to cover Cream mares to get foal numbers up," says Kerrie Beckett, who is also secretary and treasurer of the ACDHA. "There is definitely a core group continuing to do a great deal to help this breed."

If you're looking for a horse with plenty of athleticism that can carry a heavier rider or that can both pull and ride, this may be the breed for you. It may be easier to find a young, unbroke individual than a fully trained adult Cream Draft, so if you have the experience, a young horse is a great way to go. Plus, they are fun to work with! HI

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 15 to 16.3 hands

COLOR: Light, medium or dark cream color on pink skin, with white mane and tail and amber or hazel eyes.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Refined head, wide-set large, intelligent eyes; small expressive ears. Short-coupled body with well-muscled hindquarters. Wide chest; short, strong back; strong legs.

ASSOCIATION: American Cream Draft Horse Association
www.acdha.org

SUSANNE/ADOBE STOCK

THE Andalusian AND Lusitano

These Iberian breeds have long been admired for their beauty and many talents.

BY SAMANTHA JOHNSON

Europe's Iberian Peninsula is made up of modern-day Spain and Portugal, spanning 225,000 square miles. It is home to over 50 million people. This peninsula is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the east, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, France to the north, and almost touches Morocco to the south. Why the geography lesson? Because if you love Spanish horse breeds, the Iberian Peninsula has the distinction of being the original home of two breathtakingly beautiful ancient horse breeds: the Andalusian and the Lusitano.

A PEEK INTO HISTORY

These two breeds have long and impressive histories dating back thousands of years. Ancient cave paintings in the region depict horses, and there is fascinating archeological evidence as well. Early aAndalusians and Lusitanos were ridden by knights and used as war horses, and even William the Conqueror was a fan of these strong, sensible, talented horses.

In the subsequent centuries, horse breeders have so highly valued the qualities and characteristics of Andalusians and Lusitanos that the breeds have been used to develop numerous other popular and beloved breeds, including the American Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred, Friesian, and Lipizzaner, as well as warmbloods, like Hanoverians and Oldenburgs, among many others.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Dressage is among the most popular pursuits with Andalusians, as shown by Aragon GAF.

PICSOFYOU.COM

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 15.0 to 16.2 hands

COLOR: Primarily gray and bay; sometimes seen in brown, black, chestnut, buckskin, cremello, perlino and dun.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: The head has a sub-convex profile; the neck is proportionate with the height and length of the body. The withers are prominent, and the back is almost flat. The loin is short, broad, muscled and somewhat arched. The mane and tail are abundant and silky.

ASSOCIATIONS:

International Andalusian & Lusitano Horse Association
www.ialha.org

United States P.R.E. Association
www.usprea.com

In the past, Andalusians and Lusitanos had careers as war mounts and bullfighting horses, but today these breeds are stars in other disciplines, namely dressage, working equitation, driving, trail riding, and more.

NOTABLE CHARACTERISTICS

Each breed is named for a region within the Iberian Peninsula: Andalusia is in southern Spain, and Lusitania was an ancient name for what is now Portugal.

Despite their similarities in looks and in geographic origin, they are separate breeds with unique characteristics. They're approximately the same height, with short backs and flowing manes and tails, but the Lusitano is noted for having more muscular hindquarters than the Andalusian, while Andalusians sometimes have more action at the trot.

When it comes to the head, both breeds are known for their convex profiles (dished heads, like you'd see on an Arabian, are considered undesirable in Lusitanos and Andalusians). Both breeds have natural, eye-catching beauty.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

The garrocha is a pole used in traditional Spanish bullfighting and cattle work. Riders today use for suppling work, sport, and demonstrations.

Gray is the predominant color in both breeds, and bay is commonly seen as well. Other colors are allowed, including black, brown, and chestnut, as well as dilutes like palomino and cremello.

In terms of disposition, Andalusians are generally said to be a little quieter than Lusitanos, but of course that depends on the individual animal.

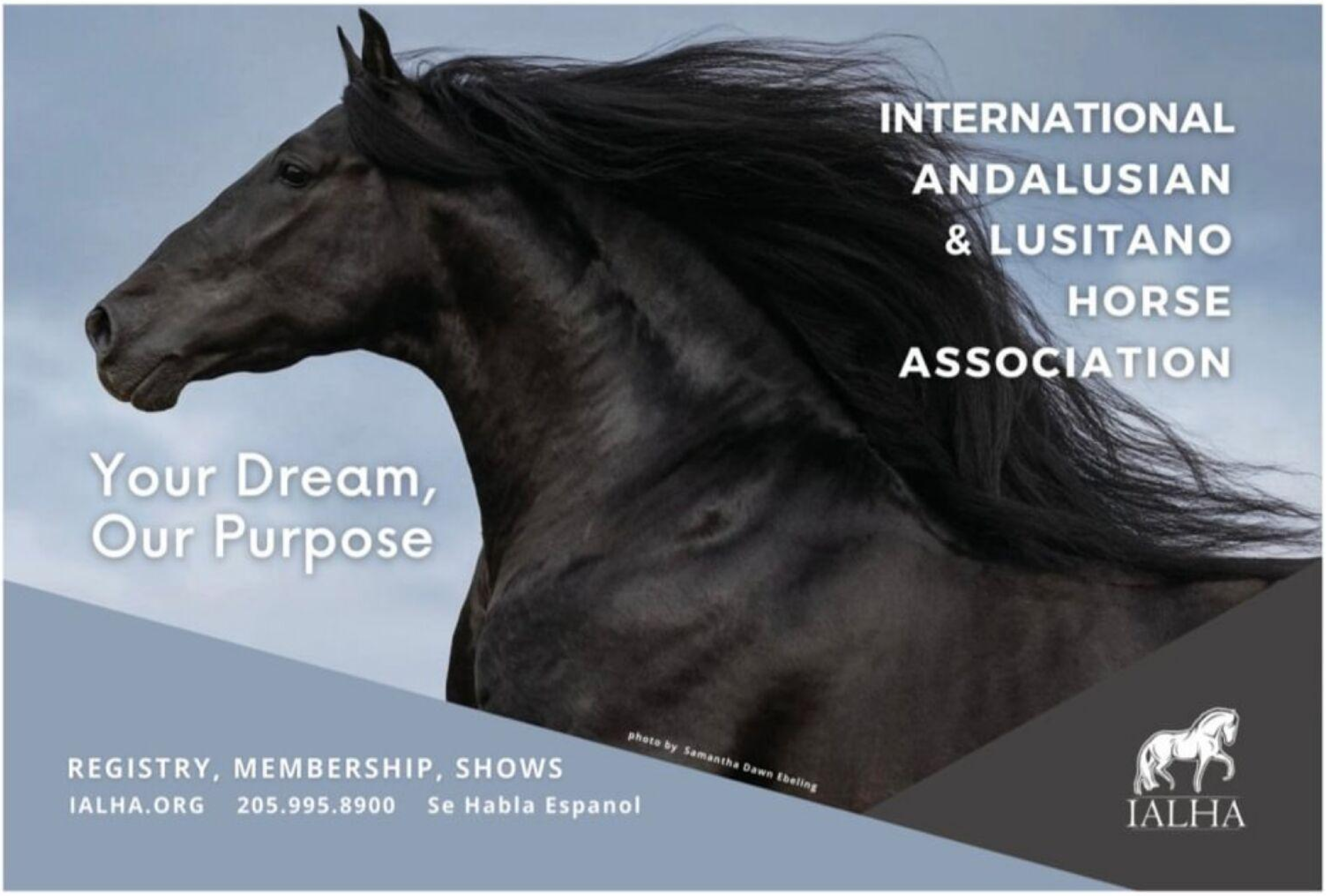
In the past, Andalusians and Lusitanos had careers as war mounts and bullfighting horses, but today these breeds are stars in other disciplines, namely dressage, working equitation, driving, trail riding, and more.

BORN TO BE STARS

It's no secret that Lusitanos and Andalusians are beautiful, but when you pair those good looks with brilliant minds and trainability, it's no surprise that these breeds are in high demand for appearances in film and television. Keep your eyes peeled during your next movie night and watch for them in films and shows like *The Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones*.

But Andalusians and Lusitanos are more than just movie stars—they've excelled at the highest levels of equestrian sports. More than a dozen Lusitanos competed in dressage at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and in 2012, an Andalusian named Fuego competed for Spain at the London Olympic Games.

If you like beautiful horses with big hearts, plenty of history, and a whole lot of talent, you can't go wrong with Andalusians and Lusitanos. HI



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Appaloosa & Knabstrupper

Both of these modern breeds descend from spotted Spanish stock that existed hundreds of years ago.

BY AIMEE ELYSE ROBINSON

Two breeds are known for their unmistakable spotted coats: The Appaloosa and the Knabstrupper. Although they may look similar, there are some key differences in their histories and conformation.

THE APPALOOSA

A staple of the once-wild West and a canvas for western art, the Appaloosa is revered for its rich history, unique coat patterns and versatility.

As Spanish conquistadors and settlers made their way to the Americas, they brought horses with them—including spotted ones. These colorful horses eventually entered horse-trading circles of Mexico, California and Oregon, painting the Plains.

Horse trading was common among the Native American tribes. The Nez Perce tribe in Washington, Oregon and Idaho was renowned for their refined craft in breeding “a Palouse horse,” named after the nearby Palouse River. Soon referred to as “Appaloosas,” they were bred not just for their spots, but for speed, endurance and intellect. These characteristics helped the tribe elude the U.S. Calvary in several battles during the Nez Perce War.

In October, 1877, a five-day battle took place in Montana, ultimately forcing the Nez Perce tribe to surrender. The Appaloosa Museum documents, “The U.S. Army took over 1,000 of the tribe’s surviving horses, sold the horses that they could find buyers for and shot many of the rest.”

THE BREED TODAY

Efforts to revive the breed began in 1938, soon becoming the Appaloosa Horse Club (ApHC), located in Moscow, Idaho. More than 700,000 Appaloosas have been registered since the ApHC’s founding in 1938.

Horses can be registered Appaloosa if they are from registered Appaloosa lineage or foaled from one registered Appaloosa parent with an approved cross. These include registered Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred or Arabian. The more stock horse-built Appaloosas are often seen in the western show pen, while lighter, sport horse individuals tend to compete in English disciplines. Horses without outcrossing in their bloodlines are often referred to as “foundation bred,” and can excel in any line of work.

Appaloosa characteristics include a recognizable coat pattern, vertically striped hooves, mottled skin (areas of pink and black), and visible white sclera of the eye surrounding the iris. They can have a coat of many colors, with base colors such as black, gray, palomino, chestnut, bay, buckskin, cremello, grulla and dun.

THE KNABSTRUPPER

Similar in color to the Appaloosa, the Danish Knabstrupper also traces back to Spanish horses from the late 1700s and early 1800s in Denmark.

Knabstruppers carried Danish officers in the Schleswig War (1848-1850) and traversed the globe as circus horses. The Knabstrupper traditionally was an all-around horse that could be driven in harness or ridden under saddle.

Today, these spotties are sought-after for dressage, driving, eventing, and more. While their popularity across Europe and the U.S. has increased significantly, they are still relatively uncommon.

“Knabstrupper breeding requirements are more akin to a warmblood breeding book, which selectively controls the breeding pool through both pedigree requirements and a grading process, which ensures a more unified type,” says Renee Tucci of the Pennsylvania Knabstrupper breeding farm Murder Hollow. “Over the last few decades, the breed has been selectively bred to a more modern sport horse type.”

Whereas Appaloosas have a variety of builds, the Knabstrupper sport horse should have a long, sloping shoulder with good freedom of movement and a well-defined wither, which flows into a strong back with short muscular loins, according to Tucci.

Next time you see either of these beautiful breeds, will you be able to spot the difference? HI

APPALOOSA BY CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Arabian HORSE

The intelligent expression and dished face of the Arabian makes this breed easy to identify.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

The most influential breed in human history, the Arabian has an instantly recognizable beauty.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

Thousands of years ago, a very special breed of horse lived in the deserts of the Middle East. This horse stood by the Bedouin fires at night and carried riders through the arid landscape by day. They were the most treasured possessions of these ancient nomads.

This very special horse, developed in the harsh landscape of the Middle Eastern desert, went on to become the most influential breed in human history. Cherished by warriors and noblemen alike, the Arabian horse not only survived through the centuries, but thrived.

ARABIANS IN SPORT

Today, the Arabian horse can be found throughout the world, made up of differing strains that developed in various geographical areas, capable of performing a variety of different jobs. Everywhere the breed can be found, it is known for its endurance and versatility, no matter what the discipline.

ENDURANCE: If there's one discipline where the Arabian horse is king, it is the sport of long-distance competitive riding, with endurance racing being the most popular event. Arabians have long dominated this discipline, and it's no wonder. They developed over

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

thousands of years to travel long distances through a harsh desert environment. Every Arabian bloodline has been represented in long-distance riding competitions around the U.S.

The Super Bowl of endurance is the annual Tevis Cup, a 100-mile endurance race that takes place in Northern California each summer. This grueling and prestigious race has been won by a purebred Arabian or Arabian cross every year except for two since the event's inception in 1955.

COURTESY AYHA

The Arabian is king in the sport of endurance racing, where horses cover up to 100 miles in one day.

SPORT HORSE: Arabian horses are known for their great athleticism, and this trait is most evident in the Arabian sport horse. Dressage in particular is one of the sport horse disciplines where they excel. Their graceful carriage and propensity for collection make them naturals in this sport.

Arabians of dressage sport horse type carry a higher-set neck, with sufficient length and flexion of the poll. Their movement is free, elastic, active and regular, with good push from behind without tension, and with a tendency toward uphill balance.

Arabians of hunter type carry a more level frame than the dressage type, yet they must display natural-looking carriage. Movement should show good ground cover and tends to be long and low, with good push from behind, free of tension and showing good balance.

RACING: The tradition of racing has been part of the Arabian horse since the breed began. In fact, the three foundation stallions of the Thoroughbred breed were all Arabians.

Today, racing is still a popular sport for Arabians, with horses from various bloodlines on the racetrack. Polish, Russian, Spanish, Crabbet and Egyptian-bred Arabians are among the most successful racehorses in the breed.

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 14.2 to 15.3 hands

COLOR: Bay, chestnut, black, gray, roan

OVERALL APPEARANCE: A small head, preferably slightly dished below the eyes; small muzzle with large nostrils; long, arched neck; deep chest and short back; horizontal croup; and naturally high tail carriage.

ASSOCIATION:
Arabian Horse Association
www.arabianhorses.org

PROMINENT BLOODLINES

Bloodlines are important in the Arabian breed, and a number of strains have developed over time. Three of the most well-known are the Polish, Crabbet and Egyptian. Each strain developed in a different part of the world and has its own unique history.

POLISH: Arabian horses came to Poland through war, when adversaries from the Middle East repeatedly attacked the country. The horses—ridden by Mongolian, Tartar and Turkish foes—found their way into Polish hands as prizes of war. In the Middle Ages, Polish stud farms were developed, and a distinct strain of Polish Arabians came into existence.

CRABBET: The Crabbet strain of Arabian began when 19th century British socialite Lady Anne Blunt and her husband Wilfrid Blunt went to the Middle East in search of fine horses to bring back to England. Lady Anne Blunt became a student of Bedouin bloodlines and worked hard to maintain the purity of the Arabians she bred. Horses from her stud are known as the Crabbet strain, and can now be found all over the world.

EGYPTIAN: A strain of Arabian called the Straight Egyptian represents the blending of pure, undisputed desert heritage. The recent history of this strain begins with Turkish ruler Muhammad Ali the Great, who led Egypt when it was a province of the Turkish Empire. He built palatial stables and gathered the finest desert horses in all the Middle East. This strain eventually found its way to America, and can be seen in many Arabian pedigrees in the U.S. today. HI

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The Brabant

The oldest draft breed is still treasured for its massive strength and kind disposition.

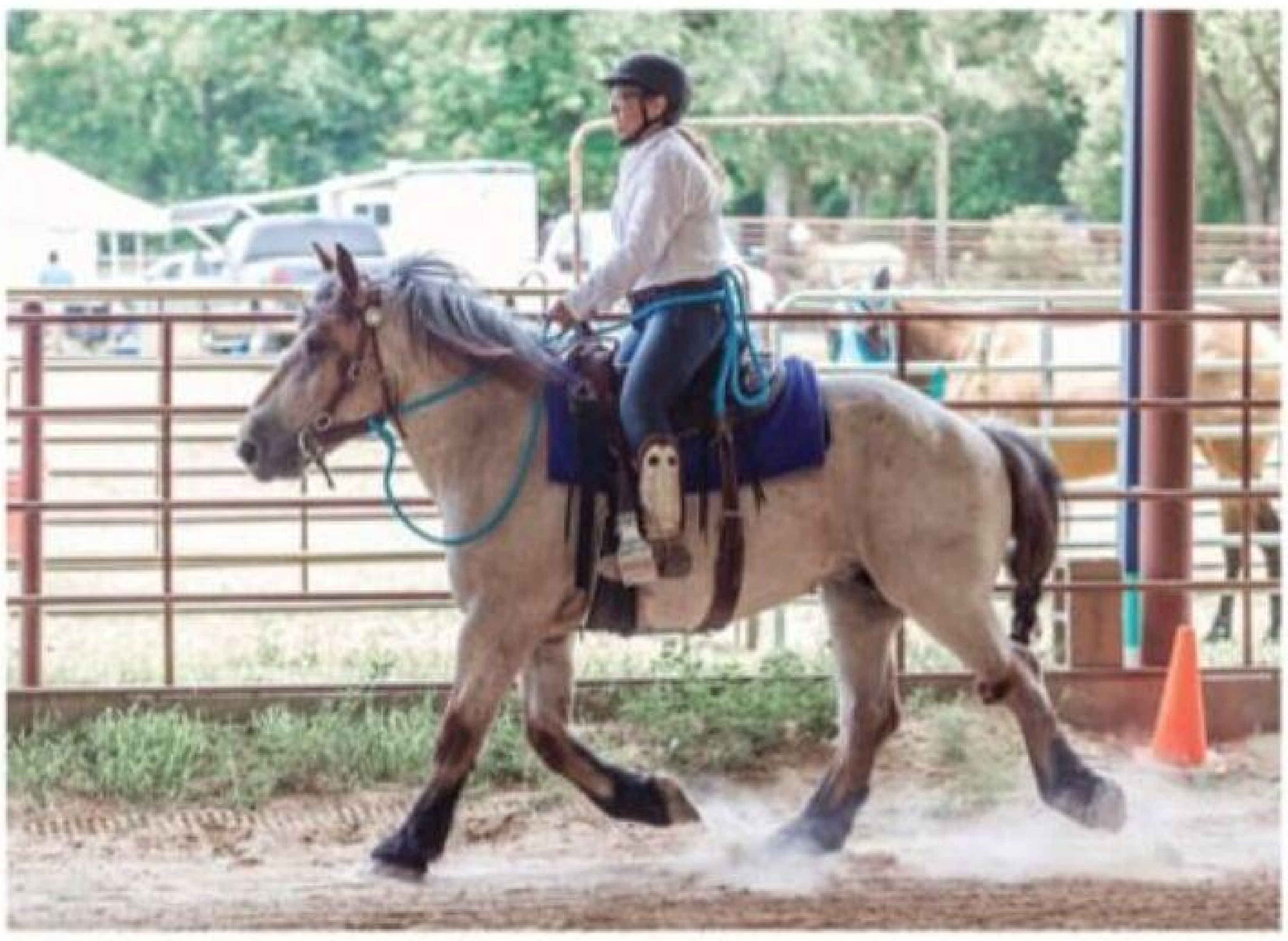
BY AUDREY PAVIA

While draft horses come in many shapes and sizes, from the gigantic Shire to the smaller Haflinger, most have something very important in common. Each owes its existence to the magnificent European Brabant.

THE EUROPEAN BRABANT

The oldest of all draft breeds, the European Brabant has been known by many names over the centuries. Once called the Flanders Horse, Dutch Draft and Brabander, the horse known today as the European Brabant has the same basic personality and physical characteristics as it did 2,000 years ago when Julius Caesar mentioned the breed in his diaries and when King John of England imported 100 studs to his private livery in 1199 AD.

Thanks to the efforts of those who cherish this breed, the European Brabant is still part of the horse world. Though rare (the Livestock Conservancy is currently studying them for possible inclusion on its critical list), the breed is still valued by those who appreciate its massive strength, kind disposition and fascinating history.



EUROPEAN BRABANT; PHOTO BY STACY PEARSALL

Known in Europe as the Belgian Draft Horse, the European Brabant was first imported to America in the 1880s. Over time, American breeders began breeding for a lighter draft horse, and the American Belgian became distinctly different from the European strain. Today in the U.S., the Belgian and the European Brabant are two completely separate breeds.

In an effort to preserve the ancient European Brabant, breeders and enthusiasts in the U.S. and Canada recently banded together to form the European Brabant Registry of America (EBRA). Since its founding in October 2021, the EBRA has concentrated its efforts on preservation by establishing the European Brabant and Brabant Stock Studbooks, as well as the critical "Breed Up" Program, which is designed to expand the breed's gene pool.

The EBRA also offers draft horse educational clinics to the general public as a means of promoting the positive attributes of all heavy horse breeds. Ultimately, the EBRA wants to ensure the original gentle giant—the European Brabant—and its descendants remain intact for future generations.

Across the globe, European Brabants are still hard at work in a myriad of jobs. Because they are such strong and tractable work horses, they are still active in the timber and farming industries. They also work chest-deep in water, dragging fishing nets and pulling barges next to canals in Europe.

In the U.S., European Brabants are often ridden. They are used in equine therapy programs, backcountry packing and trekking outfits, as school horses, and in dressage and show jumping. They also compete in single and teams driving, vaulting and circus acts.

STACY PEARSALL

European Brabants are prized for their work in harness and under saddle, as well as their loving dispositions.

According to those who love this breed, European Brabants are much more than draft animals; they are loving companions who want nothing more than to be with their humans, whether it's on the trail under saddle or cuddling in the pasture.

European Brabants stand 16 to 18 hands with an average size of 16.2. Colors include chestnut, bay, black, blue roan, red roan, strawberry roan, bay roan and gray.

Visit europeanbrabant.com to learn more.

THE AMERICAN BRABANT

In the U.S. draft horse world, two different "Brabants" can be found: the European Brabant and the American Brabant. Despite the similarity in their names, these are two very different breeds.

According to the American Brabant Association, American Brabants are a cross between European Belgians and American Belgians, plus select Percheron and Suffolk mares. Registered American Brabants have 25 to 99 percent European Belgian bloodlines.

American Brabants present with a variety of appearances, but are typically shorter in stature, short-coupled and thick-boned, with a good head and kind eye. Their calm, willing disposition makes them suitable for a wide range of jobs. They are most commonly found performing farm work, logging and pulling wagons.

American Brabants stand 15.2 to 17 hands and come in bay, black, and sorrel/chestnut. These base colors can be roaned, resulting in bay roan, blue roan, red roan and strawberry roan colorations. The rarest color is gray.

To learn more, go to americanbrabant.org. **HI**

The CLYDESDALE

This iconic draft breed holds an important spot in horse lovers' hearts.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

If you own a television, you've seen them. They're usually moving in slow motion, with white-feathered legs traveling back and forth in perfect unison. They might be galloping across wide-open plains or through deep snow. Their beauty and majesty is overwhelming—so much so that even though it's a commercial, you stop and pay attention. The magnificent equine on your screen is none other than the most famous draft horse in the world: the Clydesdale.

A beloved and iconic part of American culture, the Budweiser Clydesdales made their first-ever appearance on April 7, 1933, as a gift from August Busch, Jr. and Adolphus Busch to their father in celebration of the repeal of Prohibition. Long before this, the Clydesdale was finding its beginnings on the farms of Scotland.

Budweiser
ANHEUSER-BUSCH, INC.
ST. LOUIS, MO

The Budweiser Clydesdales are fan favorites when they make public appearances across the country.

KIM MACMILLAN/MACMILLAN PHOTOGRAPHY

A SCOTTISH HISTORY

Descended from the warhorses of the Middle Ages, the Clydesdale had been given the task of working the fields of Scottish farms. These early Clydesdales were present throughout Scotland's tumultuous history, dutifully plowing the land while wars for the country's independence were fought all around it.

It wasn't until the 18th century that the Clydesdale began to look just as it does today. The breed's official debut under the name "Clydesdale" (which is the former name of modern-day Lanarkshire, where the breed was developed) was in 1826 at the Glasgow Exhibition.

In 1877, the Clydesdale Horse Society was founded in Great Britain. Just two years later, American farmers in the Midwest who were using the breed to plow and haul heavy loads joined together to form the American Clydesdale Association. The name was later changed to the Clydesdale Breeders of the USA, and now includes members in both the U.S. and Canada.

As farm work became mechanized and the need for Clydesdales lessened, the breed's numbers began to dwindle. A handful of breeders dedicated to the breed hung on, however, and continued to keep the Clydesdale alive as a show and exhibition horse. This is a job at which the Clydesdale continues to excel today.

TODAY'S WORKHORSE

The most popular competitive events for today's Clydesdales involve hitches, where teams of anywhere from one to six horses are harnessed to demonstrate their abilities. There are numerous classes in this category, including single cart, tandem, team hitch, and a hitch called a "unicorn," which is a team of three horses: one in front and two in back.

Halter classes are also a big part of Clydesdale shows. The size, substance and quality of each Clydesdale is evaluated by a judge in the halter ring. Clydesdales can be ridden, too, and there are classes that demonstrate the breed's talents under saddle, from dressage to trail obstacles. While the show ring is the most popular place to see a Clydesdale, there are still a number of them doing traditional draft work to earn their keep.

A lot has changed for the breed since the early part of the century. After almost disappearing, the breed's numbers have grown steadily. Six hundred new Clydesdales are registered each year with the Clydesdale Breeders of the USA. While the breed's growth has been slow, it is constant as more people discover the charms of this iconic breed. HI

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 16.2 to 18 hands

COLOR: Bay is most common, but the breed also comes in black, brown and sorrel.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: The face is straight or slightly Roman-nosed. The neck is muscular and arched. The chest is deep, wide and low The back is short and broad. The legs are heavily feathered.

ASSOCIATION:
Clydesdale Breeders of the USA
www.clydesusa.com

Connemara Pony

The pride of the Emerald Isle is a versatile pony loved by children and adults alike.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

A Pony has to be versatile to go from the mountains and bogs of western Ireland to success in show rings around the world. Yet that is the legacy of the Connemara Pony, pride of the Emerald Isle.

A LONG HISTORY

The story of the Connemara begins thousands of years ago, even before Celtic horsemen throughout western Europe battled the ancient Romans. Celtic horses that had escaped from captivity ended up living wild in the rugged Irish countryside, where they became even more hardy and surefooted than their domestic ancestors.

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 13-15 hands

COLOR: Gray, buckskin, black, bay, brown, chestnut, palomino, roan, blue-eyed cream.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Rugged and sturdy; body compact, deep through the heart, with well-sprung rib cage and broad chest. Kind eye, head well shaped and balanced in proportion to the rest of the body; neck of good length and definition.

ASSOCIATION:
American Connemara Pony Society
www.acps.org

Later in history, when Irish farmers needed horses to till the stony ground for crops, they relied on the wild ponies from the mountains. Poor and with many mouths to feed, farmers typically captured and tamed mares, who could provide them a foal to sell each year. Mares were bred to native stallions and worked during their pregnancies, right up until foaling time.

By the 1920s, the Connemara Pony had become a distinct breed in need of preservation. As mechanized vehicles replaced horses on farms, their jobs became obsolete, but those who loved them did not want to see the breed fade into oblivion.

In 1923, pony breeders in Ireland's Galway County formed the Connemara Pony Breeders Society and began holding inspections to select the best ponies from the existing population for entry into the first volume of the breed's studbook.

A year later, the first Connemara Pony Show was held in the town of Clifden in County Galway. Now called the Connemara Pony Festival, it still takes place in Clifden every August.

Over time, horsemen around the world learned about the Connemara Pony, and the breed was exported to various countries. In 1956, the American Connemara Pony Society (ACPS) was formed to promote the breed in the U.S.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

SHOW PONY

When you see a Connemara Pony that has been impeccably turned out for the show ring, it can be hard to believe this once was a wild breed. But the same versatile, athletic nature that helped these ponies survive in the wild is what makes them winners in today's show ring.

Connemaras around the world compete in a wide variety of events, but according to the ACPS, the largest number of competitive Connemaras and half-bred Connemaras are in the eventing world. This is because Connemaras love to jump. Not surprisingly, they also do well in show jumping and the hunters.

Dressage is another popular sport for Connemaras because not only are they athletic, but they are also trainable, sound and easy to work with. And while they may not exhibit the huge gaits seen in warmbloods, a few Connemaras are competing at the FEI (international) levels in dressage.

Connemaras are good all-rounders, and the same pony can be a kid's mount for Pony Club and trail horse for their parent. The breed's good temperament also makes these ponies great candidates for therapeutic riding, older adults and beginning riders.

LIZ CRAWLEY

TAKING A GAMBLE

Taking a mount to win the United States Eventing Association (USEA) Pony of the Year Award is an accomplishment at any age, but Donna Miller of Alpharetta, Ga., did it last year at the age 65, thanks to her Connemara stallion, Coud'Poker Tartifume, aka "Cooper" (pictured left).

Miller started riding at the age of 25, and though an Arabian was her first horse, she always wanted a Connemara. In 1997, she bought her first part-bred Connemara, and in 2005, she imported a Connemara stallion named ArdCeltic Art ("Art") from Europe and rode him to the Intermediate/3* levels in eventing until his untimely passing at age 10.

She was searching for another Connemara stallion in Europe when she found Cooper. He was 7 years old and hadn't been broke to ride, but she saw potential in him. Cooper came to the U.S. from France in 2019, and in less than four years, the pair has accomplished a lot.

"When Cooper arrived, he exceeded my expectations, and we never looked back," Miller says. "He not only easily went under saddle, but he quickly progressed through the eventing ranks."

The pair are now competing at the Intermediate and FEI 2* levels of eventing, as well as the 1.15-meter jumpers. In 2022, Cooper won USEA Pony of the Year, along with several other national accomplishments.

"Cooper is a kind and forgiving pony, and a super fun ride," says Miller. "He loves going to work, and jumping is what he loves most, especially cross-country. His name in French means 'a lucky gamble,' and honestly, he was a seriously lucky gamble!"

CONNEMARAS IN AMERICA

Connemara Ponies have been popular in the U.S. for decades. The APCS currently has about 5,000 purebred Connemara Ponies registered, and runs a half-Connemara registry for horses that have at least one registered, purebred Connemara as a parent.

The APCS also recently started a Connemara Sport Horse registry for horses that are no less than one-quarter Connemara; at least one parent must be a registered half-bred Connemara. Including Connemara blood in upper-level sport horses has proven beneficial because the Connemara brings common sense and hardiness to these highly competitive mounts.

Of course, the Connemara Pony is not only about competition. The APCS has created an awards program called Fun with Pony, which rewards non-competitive owners and riders for sharing their stories of fun activities they've done through the year with their ponies.

RAPHA064/ADOBE STOCK

Connemaras love to jump! They can frequently be seen eventing, as well as in the hunter/jumper rings.

In keeping with Irish tradition, Connemaras in America are inspected to help maintain quality in the breed. A national inspection program provides feedback to breeders and owners about Connemara conformation, temperament and type, with the goal of preserving the most desired traits in the breed.

The Connemara Pony is the only equine native to Ireland and maintains a legacy that is truly unique in the horse world. This ancient breed will continue to win the hearts of all who know them, as it has for centuries. HI

"Winning The Hearts of All Who Know Them."
CONNEMARAS DO IT ALL!

AMERICAN CONNEMARA PONY SOCIETY

Find your next partner—www.acps.org

Breeders Directory, Classified Ads, and Information About this Great Breed

Dutch Warmblood

This beautiful breed is made to excel at the highest levels of sport, and its owners fall in love with its friendly personality.

BY SHOSHANA RUDSKI

Dutch Warmbloods, or as their registry in The Netherlands is known, Koninklijk Warmbloed Paardenstamboek Nederland (KWPN), boast high performance in dressage, jumping and in harness. Riders looking to make it to the Olympic levels or gather up blue ribbons at the lower levels are often drawn to this beautiful breed.

The North American registry originated in 1983, and it's now one of the largest studbooks for warmblood sport horses.

The goal of the KWPN is simple. According to their website, they seek to breed "modern sport horses that perform at the top level of international equestrian sports." KWPN horses are known for their athleticism, versatility, and good brain, which makes them the top choice for many disciplines.

The KWPN strives to breed healthy horses with good conformation. Additionally, they have a strong focus on temperament so that their horses can be enjoyed by both professional riders and amateurs alike.

"The KWPN is both breeder and owner/rider focused," says Drew Kemerling, registrar for KWPN-NA. "We've really tried to listen to our members and create a program that honors both the people who breed the horses but also buy and compete the horses. We have greatly expanded our awards programs to reflect our goals for this. As an open studbook, KWPN horses come in all shapes and sizes, making it possible for them to excel at many disciplines."

HISTORY OF THE BREED

Originally, the horses lived in the Netherlands. They were called Groningen and Gelderlander horses, and were used primarily for farm work. They pulled carriages and farm equipment, but the agricultural machinery industry switched the breed's focus.

When the breed began to be used more for sport than for work, more German influence was introduced into the bloodlines, such as Hanoverians and Holsteiners. Thoroughbreds, Oldenburgs, Selle Français, Hackneys, Cleveland Bays, and other sport horse blood was also incorporated.

TYPES WITHIN THE BREED

Two types of KWPN horses are typically seen; riding horses make up around 85-90 percent of them. Generally, these are purpose-bred to be top competitors in a specific sport.

The second group is the Dutch Harness Horse. They typically have more knee action than their riding-bred counterparts, and also feature a flatter back.

A smaller number belong to a third subset, the Gelder horse. Gelder-type horses can be ridden or driven. They have significant knee action and a powerful hind end. Harness-type KWPN horses show self-carriage, suspension, and high knee action.

Dressage-bred KWPN horses are light on their feet, powerful, supple, and have good self-carriage. Jumper-bred horses have a focus on scope, proper technique, bravery, and quick reflexes to make them careful jumpers.

Hunter-bred horses should be comfortable to ride with flatter movement than some of the other types. Their stride covers significant ground and does not have the higher knee or hock movement of the dressage, Gelder, or harness horses. While there is no category for eventing horses in the KWPN registry, many also excel at this sport.

"Some of the top horses in the world are a combination of these breeding types," says Kemerling. "Verdades has a harness-type mother." Dressage star Verdades and his rider Laura Graves (USA) took home team bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics as well as team and individual silver at the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games in Tryon, N.C.

COSEQUIN LEXINGTON
161
MARTIN
stübben

Boyd Martin and KWPN gelding Fedarman B were the top-placed U.S. eventing pair at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games (pictured).

ALLEN MACMILLAN/MACMILLAN PHOTOGRAPHY

INSPECTIONS

Inspections, or keurings, are held to judge horses wishing to gain access to the KWPN registry. This helps to ensure that quality horses are being bred and that the breed's representation is up to a high standard.

The KWPN is an "open" studbook, meaning that stallions of different breed can be accepted with the goal of improving the breed. In the United States, an average of 420 foals are registered yearly, although the annual numbers are much higher in The Netherlands.

The KWPN is one of the few warmblood registries that accepts all colors. Stallions must be 15.3 hands or taller to be considered for the registry, and mares must be a minimum of 15.2 hands. Most KWPN horses are 17 hands or less, although larger horses are permitted.

HAPPY OWNERS

M. Freya Evenstad is a KWPN-NA breeder, and owns Sweet Beginnings Farm in Virginia. She runs a small breeding program that typically produces one foal every other year, with the goal of producing the best of the best qualities of the breed: work ethic, a good heart, correct uphill conformation for dressage, and versatility.

She got hooked on the breed after meeting the horse who ended up being her breeding program's foundation mare.

"She was perfection from head to toe," says Evenstad. "She was the best looking horse anywhere she went, and she had fans everywhere because she was so kind and obviously loved her job so much."

She wishes everyone could know just how big the KWPN's heart is.

"They'll achieve anything you desire, if you show them how," says Evenstad. "Plus they are always a barn favorite for due to their temperaments."

Laura Mollrich, an FEI Grade IV para dressage rider in California, bought her horse, Pabatsa, when he had just turned 8 years old. He's now 25.

"[Pabatsa is] so cool," says Mollrich. "Wherever I've had him boarded, he has been the pet of the barn. Everyone needs a big clown."

During their time together, Mollrich and Pabatsa have helped each other through a plethora of significant life events, such as the passing of Mollrich's mother, lupus, scleroderma systemic sclerosis, epilepsy, and more.

Amanda Lorick is an amateur jumper rider who owns a boarding, training, and KWPN breeding facility in Nashville, Tenn. She is also a pediatric anesthesiologist to help support her KWPN hobby. She stands two stallions. Lorick says she had always wanted a warmblood, and began researching to narrow down the field.

"[I] found that KWPN horses were well-represented and top-ranking horses in multiple disciplines," she says. "In addition to being well-rounded athletes, they are bred for health and longevity. I breed for good-moving jumpers, but even if I don't get a jumper, I will have an athlete that can excel in hunters, eventing or dressage. They also tend to have very good brains, which is great for us amateurs."

SARAH E. MILLER/MACMILLAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Steffen Peters and KWPN gelding Suppenkasper earned team silver for the U.S. in dressage at the 2020/21 Tokyo Olympic Games and competed at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

Having a healthy horse that will have a long-term career is important to Lorick.

"The registry has high health standards to help predict long careers," she says. One of the reasons she picked her foundation mare, Eclipse SCF, is because her "uncle," Judgement ISF, competed successfully at the top levels into his late teens.

Evenstad summarizes the breed well:

"Any discipline, any barn, they're an asset—if you really want something special, you want a Dutch Warmblood." HI

The KWPN of North America

The official registry of the Royal Dutch Warmblood Sporthorse in North America

The Royal Dutch Warmblood sporthorse

The Royal Warmblood Studbook of the Netherlands (KWPN) is one of the best Warmblood studbooks in the world. KWPN horses consistently place at the Top of the World rankings in sports and breeding. In 2023, eight KWPN stallions placed in the Top 10 of the WBFSH ranking for dressage sires: the Top 3 was all Dutch!

In 1983, the Dutch Warmblood Studbook in North America was established as the North American Department of the KWPN in order to promote breeding and enjoyment of the KWPN horse in North America.

For over 40 years now, the non-profit KWPN-NA association has brought the passion and focus of the Dutch breeder home to North America, where breeders are now producing Top International horses competing around the world in a variety of disciplines. With more than 1,300 members and more than 550 registered foals annually over the last decade, the KWPN-NA has grown to become one of the continent's largest Warmblood organizations.

We continuously aim to promote and preserve the registered (KWPN) Dutch Warmblood horse in North America. We encourage the participation of registered KWPN horses in the various equestrian disciplines and we structure appropriate awards programs that will acknowledge and promote excellence on the part of KWPN horses, breeders, owners, riders and trainers.

We offer a wide range of advertising opportunities and are always open to discuss partnerships and sponsoring. Our organization has a wide reach in the equestrian industry in North America and beyond.

For more info on the KWPN-NA, visit www.kwpn-na.org

KWPN
NORTH AMERICA

The Friesian

This fairytale breed has a fascinating history of hard work as well as modern-day ability.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

If you love the Baroque, the noble, and the majestic, then one breed of horse should really strike your fancy: the Friesian. Once the mount of medieval knights, this striking black horse looks like it stepped out of a fairytale.

Their history traces back to a primitive horse called *Equus robustus,* which some experts believe was present in Europe during the Ice Age. The people of the Netherlands domesticated the descendants of these large horses, using them for riding and farm work.

Sometime before the 17th century, Arabian blood was introduced to the native horses of Friesland, a province in the northern reaches of the Netherlands. This "light horse" blood, combined with the genes of Spanish Andalusian horses also brought to the area, created a unique horse with high knee action. The result was a flashy mount that was heavy enough to carry armored warriors into battle.

It wasn't long before word of this Friesian horse spread throughout Europe. Horsemen began importing Friesian stallions from the Netherlands into their countries for use in local breeding programs.

Meanwhile, in the 1600s, a group of Dutch settlers came to North America along with their Friesian horses. The settlers called their colony New Amsterdam, and lived there for 50 years before the British took control of the area and renamed it New York. The English colonists began crossbreeding their British horses to the Dutch Friesians that were already there. Some experts believe the Morgan and the Canadian Horse are two New World breeds that resulted from these crossings, saying these breeds owe their existence to the Friesian.

The purebred Friesian did not exist again in America until hundreds of years later. In the 1970s, Americans who had discovered the breed while visiting Europe began importing individual horses to the U.S.

In 1983, the Friesian Horse Association of North America (FHANA) was formed as the only recognized North American representative of the Friesch Paarden-Stamboek (FPS), the original studbook for Friesian horses in the Netherlands. The Koninklijke Vereniging "Het Friesch Paarden-Stamboek" (KFPS) has registered Friesian horses since 1879.

MODERN FRIESIANS

Today, 14,000 Friesians are currently registered in the United States. American breeders follow the same criteria as their Dutch counterparts in order to the keep the Friesian breed pure.

Friesians are flashy horses, and they stand out in every discipline in which they appear. Friesians in the U.S. are currently being shown in western pleasure, show driving, dressage driving, ridden dressage, saddle seat and English pleasure.

As stunning as Friesians are to look at, they are most exceptional when it comes to temperament. Both gentle and willing, Friesians not only make great show horses, they make wonderful equine companions. Although this impressive-looking horse might seem fancy for ordinary trail riding, many Friesian owners find their horses to be perfect company for a day out on the trail. HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 15.2 to 16 hands on average, although they can be taller or shorter.

COLOR: Black. For white markings, only a small white forehead star is allowed.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Relatively short head with small, alert ears, large eyes and wide nostrils. High-set neck slightly arched at the crest. Well-developed withers, and slightly sloping croup. Long, heavy mane and tail and thick leg feathering.

ASSOCIATION:
Friesian Horse Association of North America
www.fhana.com

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Gypsy VANNER

This versatile breed is beloved for its sweet temperament and extra-flashy locks.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

They are the stuff of legend: nomads who cross the countryside in horse-drawn wagons, reading fortunes and dancing by the campfire light.

Many people have this romanticized image of the Romani people, in large part because of Hollywood, which has portrayed them in films such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *From Russia With Love*. In reality, the Romani are an ethnic group that has traveled the world for generations, migrating through the Middle East and Northern Africa, eventually ending up in Western Europe. While some of their migration was by choice, much of it was forced as they were pushed out of one country after another over the centuries.

The culture of the Romani people is rich with music, food and art, and has been handed down through the generations. An important part of that culture was, and still is, the horse. While the Romani no longer need horses to help them travel from one place to another, their horses are still treasured as a link to the past.

Late in the last century, Americans discovered something the Romani people of Great Britain had been keeping to themselves: the Gypsy Vanner. By carefully breeding Shires, Friesians and Clydesdales to the native Dales Pony, they had created a beautiful, compact draft horse to pull their *vardos*—brightly painted and intricately carved traditional Romani wagons.

VANNERS IN AMERICA

The Gypsy Vanner was first brought to the U.S. in 1996. People fell in love with its heavy bone and broad body, all in a compact package. Though originally bred to pull wagons, the Gypsy proved to be a great riding horse, versatile in many disciplines.

Much of the Gypsy Vanner's appeal lies in its striking appearance. The breed's long, flowing mane, thick tail and heavy leg feathering are unmistakable, especially when combined with the Vanner's small body. Although many Vanners come with pinto markings—often black and white tobiano—every horse color and pattern is seen in the breed.

The Gypsy Vanner—also known as the Gypsy Horse and Gypsy Cob—once numbered only a few individuals in the U.S. Today, the Gypsy Vanner Horse Society alone counts 8,500 registered Gypsy Vanners. The group also has registered horses in 17 other countries.

Since the Gypsy Vanner arrived on American shores, the breed has proven to be successful in dressage, competitive driving, jumping, ranch work and trail riding. They also compete in Gypsy Vanner breed shows in a variety of classes, including western pleasure, English, hunter hack, halter and ranch riding.

A stunning breed with an exotic history, the Gypsy Vanner is an eye-catching horse whose popularity is growing in leaps and bounds. Although somewhat rare compared to breeds that have been in the U.S. for many decades, the Gypsy Vanner is becoming so well known, it's hard to find a horse lover who hasn't seen or heard of it. HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 13.2 to 15.2 hands

COLOR: All colors and coat patterns

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Heavy bone and broad, balanced body. Forehead flat and broad; neck arched and well-muscled. An abundance of feather flowing from behind the knees and hocks; long, free-flowing mane and tail.

ASSOCIATION: Gypsy Vanner Horse Society
www.vanners.org

MARK J. BARRETT/ADOBE STOCK

The Haflinger

From the Alps to America, this eye-catching breed has proven to be perfect for the whole family.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Haflingers have been walking the ancient streets of Alpine villages for decades. The breed is named after the Tyrolean village of Hafling in northern Italy, where ancestors of today's Haflingers lived during Medieval times. These hardy mountain ponies lived in the Alps and helped local farmers survive. The breed became tough enough to withstand the harsh winters and agile enough to negotiate the winding, narrow mountain paths.

WAR-TORN HISTORY

When World War I broke out, nearly all resources went toward the war effort, and horses were no exception. Haflingers were sold to the military as pack horses and bred to be more stout. When the war ended, the region of South Tyrol, which included the town of Hafling, became part of Italy, while North Tyrol stayed with Austria.

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 14 to 15.2 hands

COLOR: Ranges from pale chestnut to dark liver chestnut, with pale (flaxen) mane and tail.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Head noble and lean; medium neck length. Pronounced withers; medium-length, muscular back. Hindquarters long and slightly sloping.

ASSOCIATION:
American Haflinger Registry
www.haflingerhorse.com

This created a divide in the Haflinger breed, limiting breeding to horses that were local. The breed suffered during this time, and the Haflinger was nearly lost. It wasn't until the early 1930s when a concerted effort was made between breeders in both North and South Tyrol to return the breed to its former quality.

Then came World War II. Afterward, the Haflinger breed was once again in poor shape. Government-run breeding centers were closed down, and some of the best Haflinger stock was lost.

BLAKLEY'S CAPTURES PHOTOGRAPHY

In 1946 and 1947, those left who still loved the breed made another attempt to save it, creating a closed studbook and establishing the Tyrolean Haflinger Breeding Association breeding center. This association still exists and runs Austrian-based breeding farms.

COMING TO AMERICA

Haflingers came to the United States in 1958 and have made America home. The breed has steadily grown in numbers, and today the American Haflinger Registry has 15,000 Haflingers registered in the U.S.

Haflingers are currently being ridden around the country in dressage, hunt seat, eventing, reining and gymkhana. They are also a popular horse for driving, and are shown in harness in a variety of classes.

One of the most popular activities to do with Haflingers is trail riding. Because of their hardy, sure-footed nature, Haflingers make great trail horses. Not only are they excellent mounts for a casual hack, they are also making a name for themselves in endurance and competitive trail riding. **HI**

You're Invited to Join

AMERICAN HAFLINGER REGISTRY

Join over 11,000 North American Haflinger owners in their promotion, support, and enthusiasm for this breed!

HaflingerRegistry.com | 330.784.0000

Icelandic HORSE

The land of fire and ice has created the ultimate hardy purebred.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

When Viking settlers first came to the island of Iceland in the late 800s, they must have been in awe of its staggering beauty. Huge glaciers, ancient volcanoes, roaring waterfalls and lush forests greeted the immigrant farmers, who brought their animals with them to their new home.

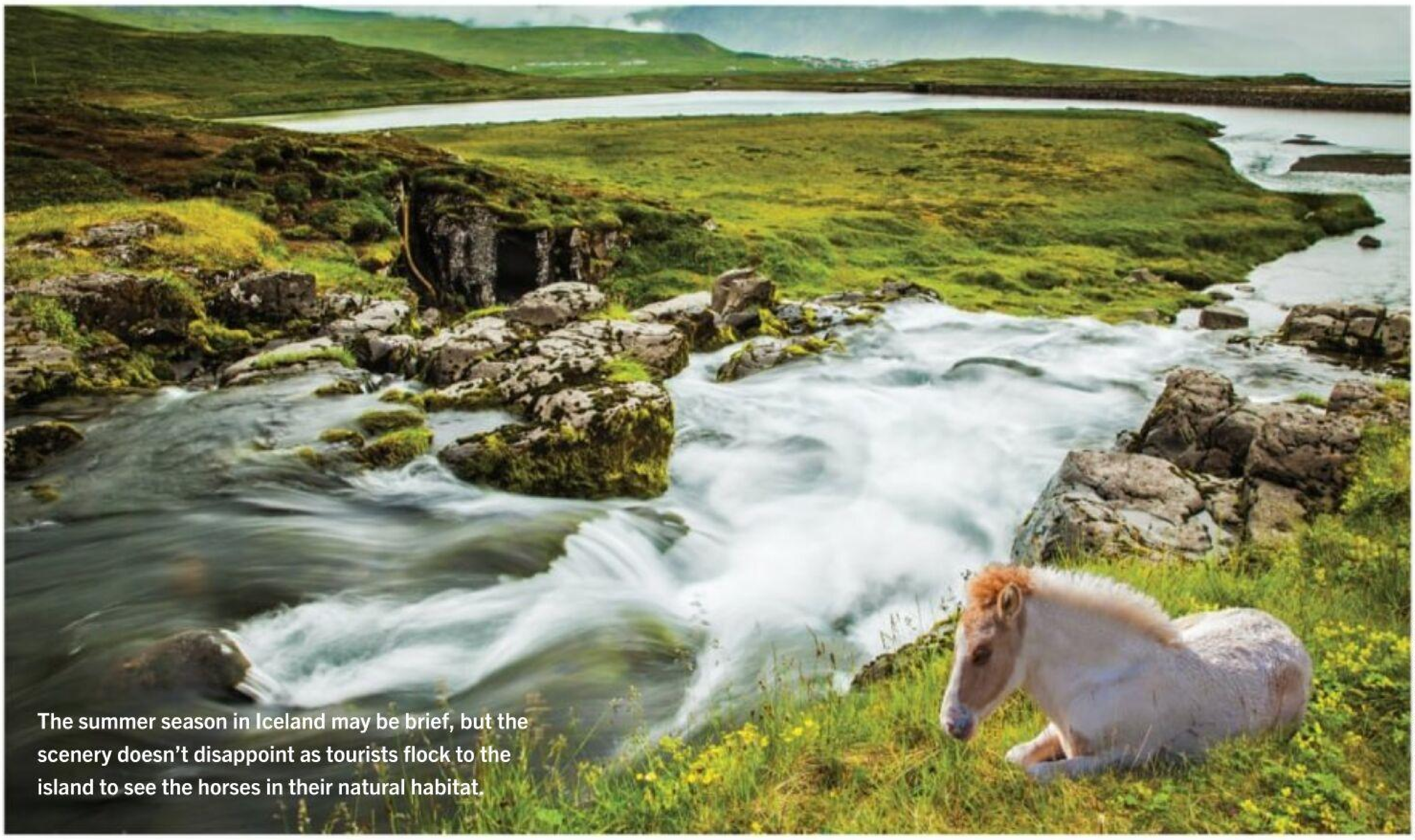
Among the livestock that made the trip from Norway were horses—ancestors of today's Norwegian Fjord. Other settlers from the British Isles soon followed, bringing ponies carrying Shetland, Exmoor and Highland Pony blood.

Over the next 1,000 years, horses in Iceland remained isolated from the rest of the world. Without the infusion of outside blood, a distinct breed of horse was formed that adapted to Iceland's severe climate and rugged terrain. Small enough to survive on the sparse native grasses that grow in the winter months, yet strong enough to work the farm and carry an adult rider, the Icelandic breed became an integral part of Icelandic life.

Although Icelandics are technically pony-sized, they are considered horses, and easily carry the weight of an adult rider.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK



The summer season in Iceland may be brief, but the scenery doesn't disappoint as tourists flock to the island to see the horses in their natural habitat.

KUSHNIROV AVRAHAM/ADOBE STOCK

The Icelandic Horses of today are descendants of the horses that survived centuries in this harsh land. Through a law decreed in 982, no horses are allowed to enter Iceland, and horses that leave are never allowed to return. Thus the Icelandic equine gene pool has remained pure for over 1,000 years.

UNIQUE TRAITS

In addition to its compact form and shaggy mane and tail, the Icelandic possesses special gaits not seen in any other breed. Every Icelandic is born with the ability to walk, trot, canter and gallop like other breeds, and to also perform the four-beat tölt. Some are also born with another gait called the flying pace.

The tölt, the most comfortable of the Icelandic's gaits, is a lateral movement where at least one foot is always on the ground. The two-beat flying pace is the fastest of the Icelandic's gaits, with speeds reaching 30 mph. In Iceland, horses are raced at this gait.

The Icelandic Horse's temperament is as treasured as its distinctive look and special way of going. The ideal Icelandic has a very easygoing personality and is virtually bombproof. The breed's lack of spookiness goes back to its isolation within its native land, where horses have no natural predators.

In Iceland, these horses are an integral part of the country's tourism industry, providing rides through the spectacular countryside during the warmer months. The horses carry visitors over lava fields and volcanic landscapes, giving a perspective of Iceland you can only get from the back of a horse.

Although Icelandic Horses are most numerous in their home country (around 80,000 currently reside in Iceland), 6,248 horses are registered with the United States Icelandic Horse Congress (USIHC). They are valued in the U.S. as pleasure, trail and family horses.

The Icelandic is a rugged little horse with great strength, endurance and temperament. As its popularity continues to grow outside its native Iceland, more people are coming to appreciate the beauty and unique talents of this special breed. HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 13 to 14 hands

COLOR: Primarily brown, bay, black and chestnut; dun, cream, silver, roan and pinto are sometimes seen.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Rectangular and compact in shape; long, thick mane and tail. Head well-defined, proud and alert.

ASSOCIATION:
United States Icelandic Horse Congress
www.icelandics.org

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The LIPIZZAN

A history of war and airs above ground has made a horse that is still beloved for dressage and driving today.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

During Medieval times, a horse's main job was to carry men into battle during wartime and to pull carriages during times of peace. If you had good horses, you had everything you needed during both war and peace.

In the mid-1500s, Austrian Archduke Charles II, ruler of Inner Austria, sought to create a special breed of horse. He imported Andalusian horses, Berbers, and Barbs from Spain and crossed them with a now-extinct breed called the Karst, a rugged, high-stepping, light gray horse native to Austria. Charles' brother, Maximilian II, the Holy Roman Emperor, also founded a stud at Kladrub in Austria (which is now part of the Czech Republic) with the same goal, and used Spanish breeds crossed with local horses. The elegant and powerful horses that resulted—eventually called Lipizzans—became heavy carriage horses at the Kladruby stud, and riding and light carriage horses at the Lipizza Stud of the Hapsburg monarchy.

The brothers exchanged breeding stock at times, crossing the lines to create aristocratic animals that were more than just war and work horses; they were partners in what had become the highly revered art of classical riding, which combined maneuvers used

The Lipizzan is best-known for its quadrille performances at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, Austria.

SPARRE/CREATIVE COMMONS

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

in battle with exercises that emphasized the horse's athletic ability and obedience to the rider.

Charles and Maximilian were members of the Hapsburg family, rulers of the most influential monarchy in European history. Connoisseurs of fine horses, the brothers created the Lipizzan breed for their own use. In response to the growing admiration for classical riding during the Renaissance among the aristocracy, the Hapsburg family established the Spanish Riding School in Vienna to teach horses and riders these fine skills. Over the next two centuries, more Spanish and Arabian blood was infused into the breed to help strengthen the Lipizzan's foundation breeding.

Six of the stallions used during the 18th and 19th century established the family lines still seen in the Lipizzan today. These stallions—Conversano, Favory, Maestoso, Neopolitano, Pluto and Siglavy—all came from lines that originated outside of Austria. To this day, Lipizzans are marked with an ancestral brand representing their family line.

FAST **FACTS**

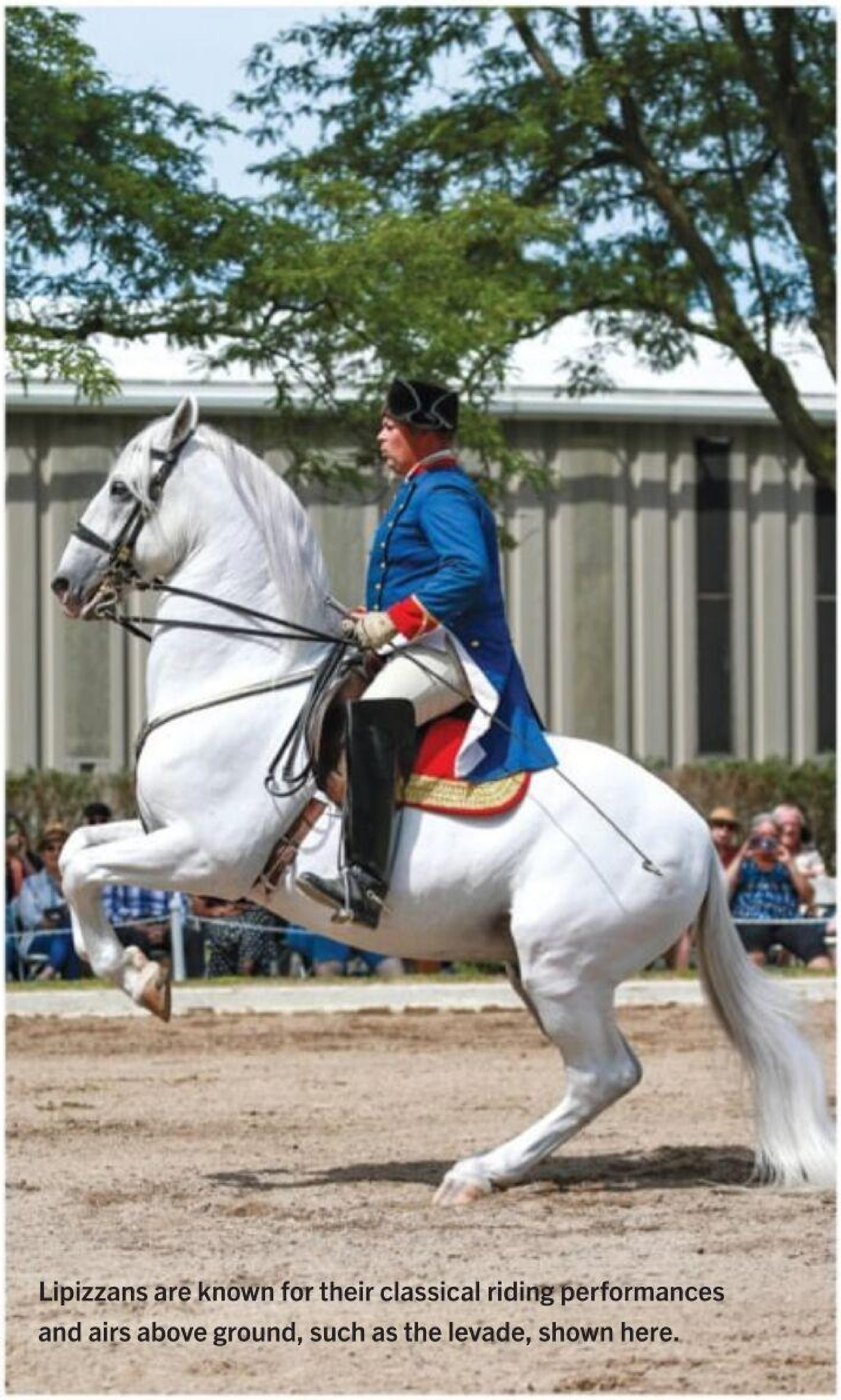
HEIGHT: 15.1 to 15.2 hands

COLOR: Gray is most predominant. Occasionally black or brown.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Head medium length with slightly convex profile. Neck medium-length, well arched with a narrow mane line. Withers well-developed and higher than the croup. The croup is strong, rounded, and well-muscled.

ASSOCIATIONS:
United States Lipizzan Federation
www.uslipizzan.org

Lipizzan Association of North America
www.lipizzan.org



Lipizzans are known for their classical riding performances and airs above ground, such as the levade, shown here.

JOHN BORYS

MODERN BREED

Many people think of Lipizzans as an exotic breed of the past, famous for its performances at the Spanish Riding School. The truth is that purebred Lipizzans are alive and well in today's horse world, with more than 900 registered in the United States. These horses are competing in a variety of sports. In Eastern Europe, they are considered the premier driving horse.

It's rare to see a Lipizzan in the U.S. because their numbers are small, so to help raise awareness of the breed, the United States Lipizzan Foundation (USLF) is working hard by using a comprehensive social media and advertising campaign meant to get the word out. The organization hopes to show that these horses, while they have a rich and fascinating history, have a place in modern competition. Don't be surprised if you see a Lipizzan the next time you attend a local dressage, driving or working equitation event. **HI**

Jacquie Bateman Photography

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Mangalarga Marchador

Brazil's gaited beauty is more than an exotic rarity.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

BELARMINO/ADOBE STOCK

You may not have heard of the Mangalarga Marchador, but if you are looking for a gentle, smooth ride, it just might be the breed of your dreams!

In 1807, when Pedro IV of Portugal migrated to Brazil due to Napoleon's invasion and became Emperor Pedro I of Brazil, he brought with him the best of the royal cavalry. These horses were the Alter Real—an Iberian breed closely related to Lusitanos and Andalusians that were reserved for royalty.

Alter Real stallions were crossed with local Brazilian mares to create the Mangalarga Marchador. Known for being docile, intelligent, and extremely comfortable to ride, the breed grew quickly in popularity.

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 14.2 to 17 hands

COLOR: Black, chestnut, bay, buckskin, dun, grulla, gray, pinto, palomino, perlino, cremello and seal bay.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Triangular-shaped head with a large, flat forehead tapering to a small, fine muzzle. The back is medium in length, and the loins are short and well muscled. The distance from the back to the loins is of lesser or equal distance to the length of the croup, which is slightly sloping and long. The tail is set at a medium height. The neck is medium in length, and is well arched and muscular.

ASSOCIATION:
U.S. Mangalarga Marchador Association
www.namarchador.org

There are over 700,000 Mangalarga Marchadors in Brazil today. In 1992, a Brazilian family moved to Florida and brought their beloved Mangalarga Marchador with them. Today, the U.S. Mangalarga Marchador Association works to preserve the breed in the United States and currently has 425 registered horses.

SPECIAL GAITS

The *marcha* gait is when the feet move alternately laterally and diagonally. The *marcha picada* gait has more lateral movements in a step, and is generally considered the smoothest of the gaits. The *marcha batida* has more diagonal movements in a step and is described as a broken trot.

Another, not-yet-recognized gait may occur, called the *marcha de centro,* where lateral and diagonal movement

happens equally. In all these gaits, one foot is always touching the ground, so the horse is never suspended off the ground like in the trot or pace, creating a more comfortable and secure feeling for the rider.

A NOBLE STEED

"I had been told that Mangalarga Marchadors were very smart, but I didn't believe it until I owned one for myself," says Randy Gassett of Phoenix, Ariz.

Gassett had a business deal with a friend that breeds Mangalarga Marchadors, making her part owner of an unborn foal. When that foal ended up being a colt, not a filly, the plan was to sell him. But Gassett knew the colt wasn't going anywhere once he got to her ranch.

"I fell in love with the colt and knew he was going to be as nice or nicer than my Fox Trotter," Gassett shares. "So, I bought out my friend's share, and Nobre do Summerwind [nobre is Portuguese for 'noble'] was mine. He is the only Mangalarga Marchador that I have owned and is an exceptional horse!"

Now 5, Nobre is 15.2 hands and performs the *marcha batida* as well as the walk and canter. Gassett trained Nobre herself, competing him in in-hand trail competitions as a yearling.

"He has such a wonderful temperament, loves people, is curious and full of play, and has never tried to buck or rear while under saddle," she says.

Now that he is older, Nobre competes in dressage and working equitation. They have qualified for the Working Equitation Zone Championship in Missoula in 2023, finishing 5th in level two.

Kharisma loves to jump and is in training for eventing.

ASHLEY KEMP PHOTOGRAPHY

He has many champion and reserve champion titles at both schooling and rated shows, and is now competing at level three. Gassett says Nobre has the smoothest canter she has ever ridden.

PLENTY OF CHARISMA

Carolina Peterson, who lives in Friday Harbor, Wash., has known the Marchador breed since childhood, having grown up in Brazil. She owns two geldings, Tigre do Summerwind and Kharisma do Summerwind. Tigre performs the *marcha picada* and is a fantastic trail horse that also does working equitation. Kharisma performs the *marcha batida,* and aside from trail, excels in eventing.

"Kharisma came to San Juan Island, Wash., and started his development with eventing trainer Servando Garcia, who soon introduced Kharisma to jumping," says Peterson. "It's easy to say it was 'love at first sight.' Kharisma loves to jump, loves the challenge, and trusts his rider. He is still young, but should have a great career in eventing or whatever job he chooses to do."

While a gaited horse in eventing could normally be a challenge, Peterson says Kharisma shines.

"He has successfully competed at Novice level, quite a challenge for a gaited horse, but with Servando's endless efforts and Kharisma's willingness to work, he is moving toward being successful at a higher level," she says. "Kharisma is the only Marchador participating in eventing competitions in the U.S."

Peterson explains that dressage is difficult for gaited horses, but Kharisma is taking that on too.

"We believe quality, ambitious and well-trained Mangalarga Marchadors will perform well in any job," she says. "Tigre and Kharisma are kind, docile, coachable and intelligent horses with big personalities." HI

COURTESY RANDY GASSETT

Randy Gassett and Nobre compete in dressage and working equitation.

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MINIATURE HORSE

This pint-sized breed offers personality plus.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

In the 1600s, the nobility in Europe treasured unusual pets. This included horses—but not just any horses. By the late 1700s, very small horses that had been bred down from normal-sized horses could be found living among royalty.

Not all small horses lived the life of luxury, though. When laws were passed in England in the 1800s banning the use of children as mine workers, many of these small horses were put on the job and used to pull coal wagons. The Dutch also started using miniature-sized horses to work in coal mines around the same time.

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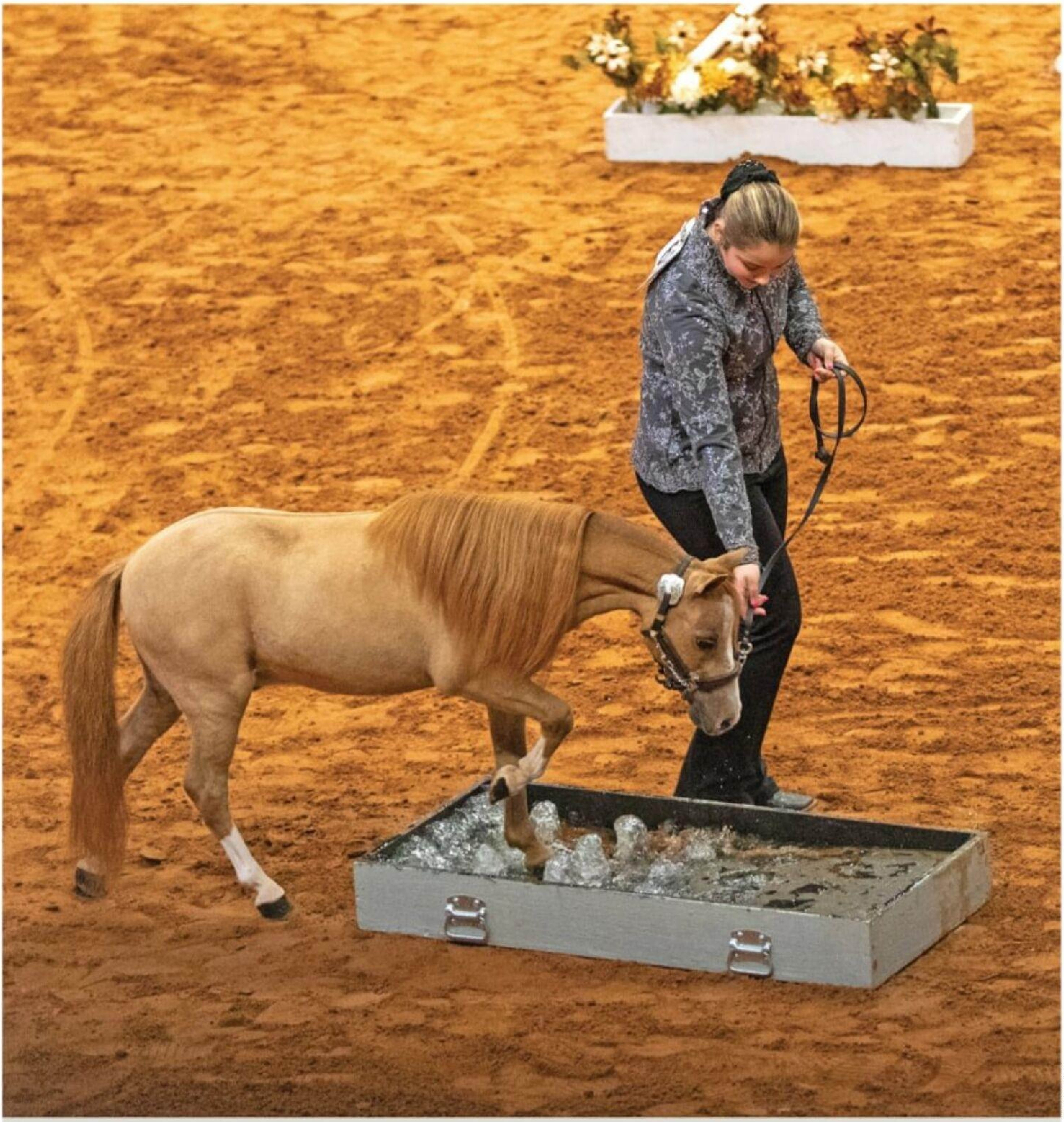
CASEY MCBRIDE/COURTESY AMHA

Since they are too small to ride, Minis are often shown in-hand or in harness, and make excellent therapy animals.

ZUZANA TILLEROVA/ADOBE STOCK



MARY CAGE

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: Must not exceed 34 inches at base of the last hair of the mane (AMHA). AMHR allows 34-38 inches for "B" division.

COLOR: Any coat color, pattern, white markings and eye color are equally acceptable.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: A beautiful, small, well-balanced horse such that if all reference to size were eliminated, it would have the same conformational proportions of the full-sized light breeds.

ASSOCIATIONS:

American Miniature Horse Association (AMHA)
www.amha.org

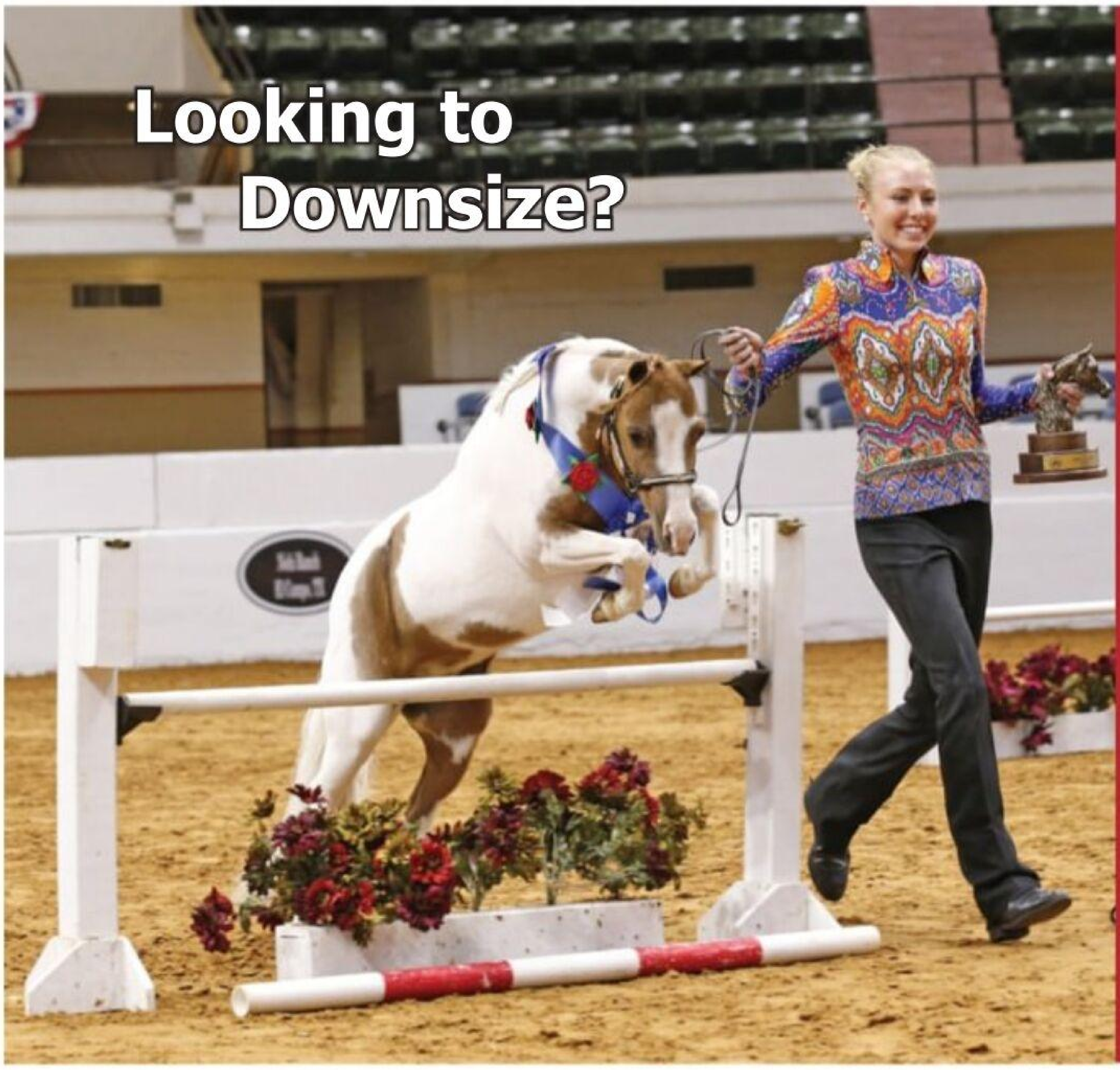
American Miniature Horse Registry (AMHR)
www.shetlandminiature.com

The idea also caught on in the U.S., and by the 1900s, little horses imported from Europe were pulling coal wagons in the Appalachian Mountains. Called “pit ponies,” these small equines were eventually crossed with Shetland Ponies, creating the Miniature Horse we see today.

In the U.S., the Miniature Horse became a recognized breed in 1971 by the American Miniature Horse Registry. Another breed registry, the American Miniature Horse Association, came about in 1978. Registered Miniature Horses can be as tall as 34 inches or 38 inches, depending on the registry and division.

Today, Miniature Horses are used for driving small carts, are shown in halter classes, and are sometimes ridden by very small children. Many Miniature Horses are simply pets or serve as companions for other animals. More recently, Miniature Horses have found an important role in providing animal-assisted therapy to people, and they can also be trained as guide animals for the blind. **HI**

VIKTORIA MAKAROVA/ADOBE STOCK



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CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Missouri FOX TROTTER

The smooth-gaited horse of the Ozark Mountains is beloved on the trails, but it can do just about anything.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

Horse breeds reflect the land where they were developed, and the Missouri Fox Trotter is no exception. Native to the Ozark Mountains, which traverse the states of Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas, the Missouri Fox Trotter is a hardy, sure-footed horse that can handle the roughest trails and the harshest mountain environments. As a bonus to its hardy constitution, the Missouri Fox Trotter has a smooth, four-beat gait that can comfortably support a rider for many miles.

The Missouri Fox Trotter is a culmination of the breeds Southern settlers brought to the Ozarks with them in the early 1800s. Arabians, Morgans, Saddlebreds, Tennessee Walkers and Standardbreds all accompanied the farmers that settled in these mountains. They used their horses to clear forests, sort livestock, and work the fields they planted on the plateaus common in the Ozarks.

These same horses carried them from place to place and pulled their buggies on the weekend. By the end of the 19th century, a gaited horse unique to these mountains had developed from the original breeds and was being selectively bred. Thus, the Missouri Fox Trotter was born.

By the 1940s, motorized vehicles had eliminated the need for horses to work farms and provide transportation around the U.S., and the Ozarks were no exception. But the Missouri Fox Trotter was a beloved breed that had become well known throughout the area, and in 1948, the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association (MFTHBA) was formed to help preserve them. In 2002, the breed was named the state horse of Missouri, making it an official state symbol.

In 2004, the MFTHBA created a separate registry for Missouri Fox Trotters who stand between 11 and 13.3 hands, known as Missouri Fox Trotter Ponies.

GOOD STUFF

The Missouri Fox Trotter is a short-backed, graceful horse prized for its three natural gaits: the flat-footed walk, the fox trot and the canter.

The flat-footed walk is a four-beat gait characterized by each foot lifting and setting down an in even cadence. With each stride, the back foot reaches forward and slides in as it sets down. The gait is smooth to sit and helps preserve the rider's energy over the miles.

The breed is best known for its second fastest gait, a broken diagonal gait called the fox trot. The gait has a distinctive rhythm created by the horse moving its

COURTESY MFTHBA

Ranch sorting was most recently added to MFTHBA shows, and the association now offers World Champion titles in this discipline.

Developed in a mountain environment, Fox Trotters can handle the roughest trails.

COURTESY VALLEY SPRINGS FOXTROTTERS

front foot a split second before its opposite rear foot. At least one of the horse's feet is in contact with the ground at all times, with sometimes two feet in contact, giving it smoothness and stability over uneven ground. Fox Trotters can travel as fast as 10 mph in this gait.

The canter is a broken, three-beat gait in the Missouri Fox Trotter, and should be performed as an athletic lope or a collected rocking-chair canter.

In addition to its smooth gaits, the Missouri Fox Trotter is celebrated for its gentle and willing temperament. Known for being relaxed and for enjoying human company, they make great companions and unflappable trail horses.

VERSATILITY

It's no surprise given its history and characteristics that the Missouri Fox Trotter's most popular job is as a trail horse. Its smooth gait and quiet disposition make it a natural.

But the breed also makes a great and versatile competition horse. They participate in a variety of events, such as endurance riding, competitive trail, obstacle challenges, performance (gait competition), model (halter), showmanship, horsemanship, reining, English pleasure, speed events and ranch horse competitions.

Ranch sorting was most recently added to MFTHBA shows in 2017, and the association now offers World Champion titles in this discipline, which is becoming very popular for the breed. In fact, the MFTHBA recently launched a lifetime achievement program that recognizes achievements in 16 different categories, including ranch sorting. The breed's cow sense should come as no surprise, since the Missouri Fox Trotter was also used to work cattle in the Ozarks where it was developed.

Every year, the MFTHBA sponsors the Missouri Fox Trotter World Show and Celebration in Ava, Mo., home

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 14 to 16 hands for horses

COLOR: All horse colors. Pinto markings permitted.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Proud carriage with a graceful neck and well-proportioned head. Back is short and strong. Overall look of substance and grace.

ASSOCIATION: Missouri Fox Trotting Breed Association
www.mftba.com

of MFTHBA headquarters. The show includes a variety of classes and competitions, including trail ride events outside the arena, designed to highlight the versatility of the breed.

Missouri Fox Trotters are found in all 50 states and a number of countries around the world. The European Missouri Foxtrotting Association registers the breed in the European Union, and sponsors shows and other events for the breed.

In the U.S., 104,425 MFTs have been registered since the MFTHBA registry started. The breed is continuing the grow in popularity as horse lovers everywhere discover its endearing traits. **HI**

MARK J. BARRETT/ADOBE STOCK

Proud carriage with a graceful neck and well-proportioned head are characteristic of the breed.

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Queen's Moody Blues and Kelly Hendrik have advanced all the way to the Grand Prix level in dressage.

JOHN CHEVALIER

MORGAN HORSE

Whether English, western, or driving is your sport of choice, the Morgan excels.

BY STEPHEN KINNEY, SENIOR EDITOR OF *THE MORGAN HORSE* MAGAZINE

The Morgan is America's oldest native breed of horse. All registered animals descend from the single 1789 stallion Figure, also known as the Justin Morgan horse—the namesake of his owner, a music teacher in 18th century Vermont.

Historically, the breed evolved through service, pulling loads over the hills of New England, winning international acclaim in trotting races, and featuring mightily as a Civil War cavalry mount. Then, as now, Morgan breed traits include soundness of mind and body, trainability, and companionable dispositions. They are also famously easy keepers.

THE MORGAN TODAY

If the sport horse or western disciplines are calling to you, a Morgan horse may have your name on it. The diverse talents and easy domestic availability of America's oldest breed are providing a viable alternative in an increasingly specialized equine marketplace.

"A well-ridden, typey Morgan will always turn heads," says Bernadette Stang, who, with her husband, Jack, maintains the Morgan Sport Resource website. "Morgans also tend to be smaller, people-friendly mounts that are easier for amateurs to ride and less expensive to purchase and keep. The breed's inherent versatility also gives riders options to explore multiple sports. But those

Morgans who have been trained and ridden by highly skilled riders have been very competitive, including at the advanced levels, in a range of disciplines."

DRESSAGE DREAM

Dressage coach Gwyneth McPherson works with rider Kelly Hendrick and her Morgan gelding Queen's Moody Blues. Successfully advancing to the Grand Prix level—the highest in the sport of dressage—he has defied common wisdom about alternative breeds in the specialized sport.

"I have always believed in the ability of non-traditional breeds to compete successfully in dressage," says McPherson. "He's proved to be an amazing example. I am so honored to be a part of their journey."

Queen's Moody Blues is also a steady trail horse, has a fabulous work ethic, loves people, can be ridden safely by a 7-year-old, and is beautiful to look at.

"When I bought him, his barn name was Puck, and that fits him perfectly," says Hendrik. "He has a wonderful personality, is sociable, and loves attention."

She notes that, given the breed's inherent aptitude for collected gaits, Puck shines at the passage and piaffe. And his smaller size assures ease of completing tempi changes (changes of lead every stride) across the diagonal.

"As I worked with him, he just gave me everything he had," says Hendrik. "Every ride is a pleasure because he tries so hard to please."

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

Abbie Trexler comes from a family of Morgan lovers and is employed as executive director of the American Driving Society (ADS).

"Morgans are incredibly popular in combined driving, pleasure driving, and recreational driving," she says. "They have great stamina, are generally strong with sturdy bone, and are incredibly smart. They are athletic enough to compete in [driven] dressage, complete a marathon course that can reach distances of nearly 20 km [12 miles], and then drive a timed cones course over the course of a weekend.

MEREDITH FETTERS

Suzy Stafford and PVF Peace of Mind show the Morgan's driving skills.

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Reined cow horse trainer Jared Ashcraft says Morgan stallion Westwind Otto is easy to ride and train.

ROCKIN' HORSE PHOTOGRAAPHY

"A baroque trotting breed, it's hard to find a prettier picture than a Morgan in front of an antique carriage at a pleasure driving show," Trexler continues. "Many of our members keep their horses at home, so they use their Morgans for recreational driving as well."

COW SENSE

Winning reined cow horse trainer Jared Ashcraft got a horse of a different color when owner/breeder Bryan Blatt put the palomino Morgan stallion Westwind Otto in training with him.

"I may be the only cow horse trainer to have three Morgans in his barn," says Ashcraft. "All three have a natural stop. They are very easy to ride and train. I've told people if I was looking for a ranch horse, I'd have one of these any day."

FAMILY FRIEND

Denny Emerson, 1974 team gold medalist in three-day eventing and current-day social media figure, has returned to his roots with Morgan horses. In his retirement years, his Morgan mares serve both his competition and recreational needs.

"I had Morgans as a kid, and always knew that I'd have them again after eventing," says Emerson. "Now I have four Morgan mares and ride them for miles each week on our Vermont hills. My dad did the same thing—started driving a Morgan when he was in his mid-60s and was still active with his Morgan gelding Miller Commander well into his 70s. My granddaughter started riding a Morgan when she was 9. Morgans get to be part of the family—friendly, 'in-your-pocket' horses that take you on all sorts of adventures, sleigh driving, trail riding, dressage, jumping, showing, or just hanging out. And they're beautiful. The perfect trio: the family cat, the family dog, the family Morgan."

Learn about the Morgan horse through the official breed association at morganhorse.com, and find additional information at morgansportresource.com. **HI**

Denny Emerson and one of his Morgan mares, Catch a Cloud.

HEIDI OSGOOD METCALF

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American MUSTANG

A symbol of the American West, Mustangs have an undeniable spirit.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

Proud, majestic and—most of all—free. These are the characteristics people cherish about the American Mustang, the wild horse that has lived off the land in North America for centuries.

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

Although equines originally lived on the continent, horses had become extinct here by the time Spanish explorers arrived on the shores of the New World in the 16th century. The ancestors of today's horse had traveled across the Bering Land Bridge into Asia, where they thrived.

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas on his second expedition, he had horses with him. These Iberian-bred horses were the first of their kind to set foot on the continent since the species had disappeared in the Americas thousands of years prior.

Within 200 years, the horses were flourishing on the North American continent with the help of the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest. Responsible for caring for the Spaniards' horses, the Pueblo people secretly learned how to ride.

When the Spaniards were expelled from the Southwest during the Pueblo Revolt, many of the horses remained. The Pueblo tribes became adept horsemen, and over time, horses spread north to the Plains tribes and those in the Pacific Northwest. By the 1800s, Native Americans throughout the West had made the horse an integral part of their culture.

As the horse spread through North America, individual animals escaped into the wild. By the 1800s, the mountains, deserts and prairies were full of feral horses, all descendants of the original Spanish mounts brought to the New World.

THE MUSTANG TODAY

The descendants of these great Spanish herds, along with thousands of horses that escaped or were set loose during the 1800s, still roam free in the American

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Mustang Heritage Foundation
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Online Corral | **Adopt or purchase a wild horse or burro from the comfort of your home: *WildHorsesOnline.BLM.Gov***

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program

BLM.gov/WHB ● (866) 468-7826

MW CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Mustang Classic was the first of its kind English discipline national Mustang competition, held in September 2024.

West. Once the victims of people who rounded them up for slaughter, today's wild horses are protected by the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses & Burro Act. That law charged the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with the management of the wild herds.

In order to manage the number of wild horses living on 26.9 million acres of federal land across 10 western states, the BLM conducts regular roundups within 177 herd management areas. These horses are put up for adoption to the public through the Wild Horse & Burro Program.

Anyone can adopt a wild horse as long as the adopter meets certain qualifications. You must be at least 18 years of age, must be able to provide a minimum 400 square-foot (20' x 20') enclosure per horse, and be able to prove you can provide adequate feed, water, facilities and humane care.

Since the wild horse adoption program began in 1971, approximately 245,000 Mustangs have been adopted out to new homes. While most of these horses have been enjoyed as trail mounts, recreational riding horses and companions around the country, many have gone on to successfully compete in a number of different disciplines, including dressage, eventing, gymkhana, cow work and more. **HI**

GARYTOG/ADOBE STOCK

The Extreme Mustang Makeover gives trainers 100 days to prepare untamed Mustangs for competition, with horses auctioned off to new homes afterward.

BRANDYL CALLEY

HELP BRING
MUSTANGS
home

There are more than 60,000 wild horses and burros in holding corrals and pastures. Through innovative programs and events, we're helping bring them home. MHF has been involved in the adoption of over 25,000 horses and burros. You can help, too.

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Every dollar you give helps support programs and events that bring wild horses and burros home.

Participate

Put your horsemanship skills to the test by adopting your own mustang and competing in trainer's challenges and the Extreme Mustang Makeover.

LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED AT

mustangheritagefoundation.org.

Mustang
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

Norwegian FJORD

The horse of the Vikings is more than a cute face—they can also do it all.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

Historians believe the ancestors of today's Norwegian Fjord Horse first appeared in Norway during the Ice Age. These horses were domesticated about 4,000 years ago and went on to become the horse of the Vikings. Archaeological excavations at Viking burial sites show that Fjord Horses were often buried alongside Vikings of high status.

Over the centuries that followed, the Fjord was used in Norway mostly as a draft horse, working the fields and clearing the countryside of timber to make room for farms and villages. The Fjord was also used as a saddle and pack horse and was known for its hardworking temperament. In the middle of the 19th century, an organized breeding program was established for the Fjord in Norway.

COMING TO AMERICA

In the 1950s, Americans discovered the beauty and durability of the Norwegian Fjord and imported 22 quality Fjords into the country and began breeding them. In 1978, the Norwegian Fjord Horse Registry (NFHR) was formed in the States. Their goal was to register the Fjord and preserve its purity and original type in America.

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 13.1-14.3 hands

COLOR: Brown dun, white dun, gray dun, red dun and yellow dun.

OVERALL APPEARANCE:
Head is medium-sized and well-defined with a broad, flat forehead and a straight or slightly dished face. The eyes are large. Ears are small and alert. The neck is well muscled and crested. The body is short-coupled with good depth, large heart girth, and well-developed muscles. The legs are powerful, with substantial bone.

ASSOCIATION:
Norwegian Fjord Horse Registry
www.nfhr.com

Today, around 6,900 Norwegian Fjords are registered in the U.S. with the NFHR. The breed is growing in popularity—not only Stateside, but also around the globe. Fjord registries can be found throughout the world, and right now, around 6,000 Fjords live in the breed's native country.

TODAY'S FJORD

Norwegian Fjord Horses have a unique look that harkens back to their prehistoric ancestry. In addition to their willing temperament, their appearance is their most well-known characteristic. Nearly 90 percent of all Fjord Horses are brown dun in color, with the other 10 percent being red dun, gray dun, white dun or the very rare yellow dun.

The Fjord's "wild" dun color comes with primitive markings like barring on the legs and a dorsal stripe that runs from the forelock down the neck and back and into the tail. Additionally, some Fjords have dark stripes over the withers.

Norwegian Fjords also have a unique mane. The center hair of the mane is dark—usually black—while the outer hair is white. Many Fjord owners cut the mane short so it will stand erect, and trim it in a characteristic crescent shape to emphasize the graceful curve of the horse's neck. The white outer hair is then trimmed slightly shorter than the dark inner hair to display the dramatic dark stripe.

Norwegian Fjords do more than just look good. They are hardy mounts and easy keepers and can work for hours on end if properly conditioned. Fjords are currently excelling in many disciplines, including western riding, cattle work, jumping, eventing, dressage, combined driving and vaulting. Fjords are popular as trail mounts and are used in competitive trail riding. Although they are small, they are a good choice for riders of all ages.

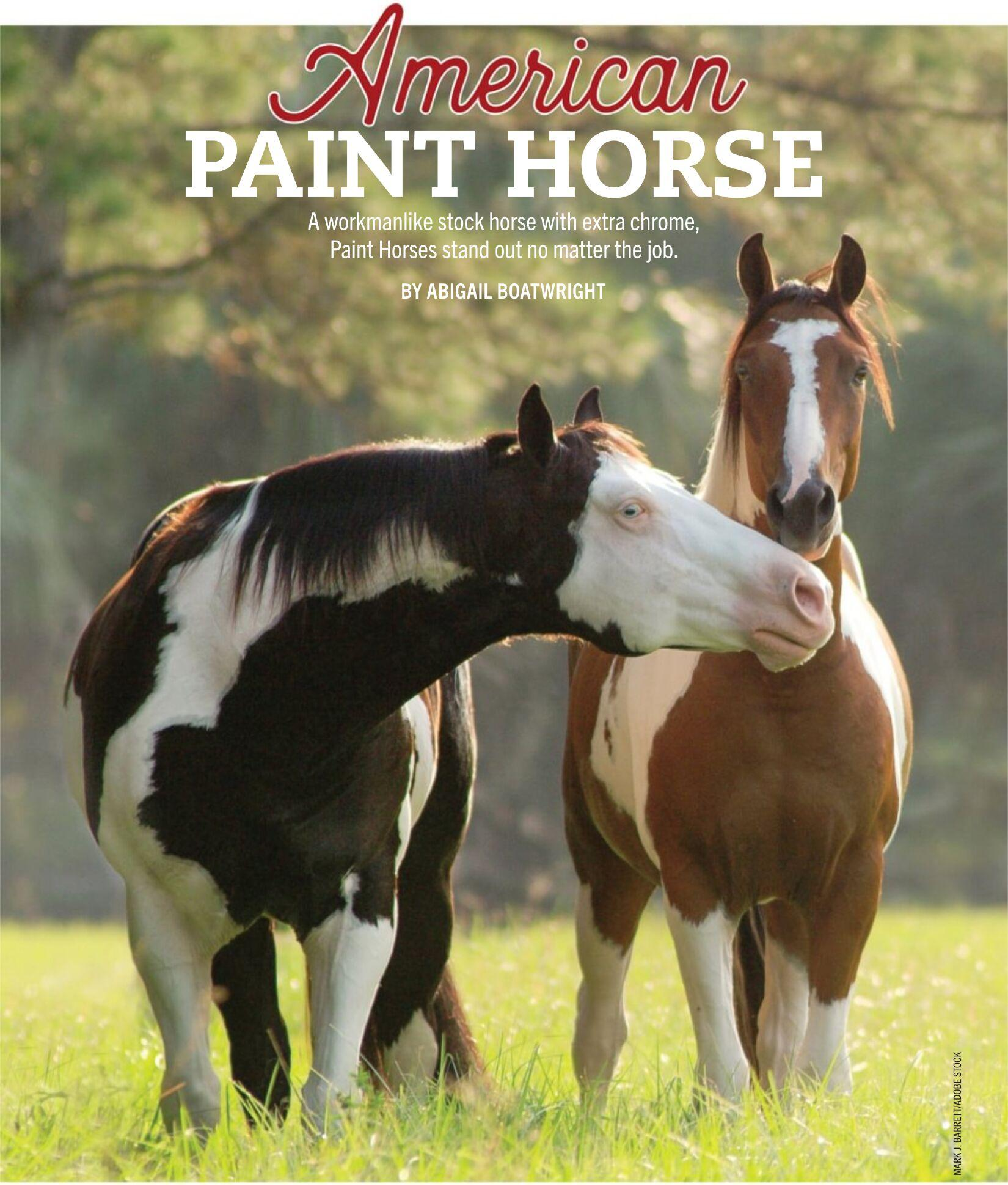
Check out this issue's cover for another Norwegian Fjord! HI

SCULLYPICTURES/ADOBE STOCK

American PAINT HORSE

A workmanlike stock horse with extra chrome, Paint Horses stand out no matter the job.

BY ABIGAIL BOATWRIGHT



MARK J. BARRETT/ADOBE STOCK

In a sea of solid bays and sorrels, the flashy white markings on an American Paint Horse stand out—there's no missing a Paint. But beyond their eye-catching looks, Paints bring a steady temperament and athleticism to a versatile array of jobs. From the western show pen and hunter/jumper classes to racing and ranching, Paints have shown their mettle in just about any task.

THE ASSOCIATION

The American Paint Horse Association (APHA) got its start in 1962 as an organization designed to recognize stock horses with more white on their bodies than what was permissible for a registered American Quarter Horse. Today, the APHA is the second-largest breed association in the United States.

To be registered with the APHA, Paint Horses have to have two registered APHA parents or one Paint parent and one Quarter Horse or Thoroughbred parent. Additionally, a Paint must have white markings that meet the breed's standards.

Offspring of two Quarter Horses, two Thoroughbreds, or a Quarter Horse and a Thoroughbred with the required markings can also be registered Paints, but they need to have submitted parentage and coat pattern DNA information.

A horse that meets the parentage criteria but lacks enough white markings can be registered as a Solid Paint-Bred (formerly known as Breeding Stock), with access to many of the benefits of APHA registration, but carrying a different designation.

In contrast, the Pinto Horse Association accepts horses with bloodlines of many other breeds outside of Paints, Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds. Pintos are mainly required to have white markings in a qualifying zone. Therefore most Paints can be registered as a Pinto, but not all Pintos can be registered as Paints.

ALL ABOUT THE CHROME

The ideal Paint possesses a stock horse-type build: well-muscled proportions, but with powerful hindquarters, a trim throatlatch and a refined head. Paints are most known for their distinctive coat patterns, which generally fall into three categories:

Tobianos usually have white legs below the knees and hocks, with the darker body color on its sides. Spots are often smoother, like ovals or circles. The horse's head usually has a blaze, star, strip or snip on a solid head. Often, the tail is two colors.

Overos are the most common pattern seen on a Paint. At least one of an overo's legs will be dark, and the white of the horse will not usually cross over the horse's back. White markings are usually irregular, splashy or spotted. Overos can have facial markings, such as a bald face, an apron face or bonnet face. Their tails are usually a single color.

Toveros carry pattern characteristics of both tobianos and overos.

IN THE SHOW PEN

Paint Horses are athletic, excelling in sports where quick moves are required. They can also have cow sense, making them ideal for ranch work. But they're incredibly versatile: In addition to APHA-approved horse show classes and short-distance racing, Paints compete in a variety of disciplines in both English and western tack.

In addition to helping you stand out from the crowd, entering your Paint Horse in qualified non-breed specific events can earn you bonus cash. APHA's Chrome Cash program gives extra money to National Cutting Horse Association, National Reined Cow Horse Association, American Cutting Horse Association and World Conformation Horse Association performance events.

Beyond competition, Paints are steady and calm, ready to get to work no matter their job. But thanks to their one-of-a-kind markings, Paints do it all while standing out from the crowd. HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 14 to 16 hands

COLOR: Paints have contrasting areas of white and dark coat colors on their bodies. Coat patterns include variations of tobiano, overo and tovero, as well as solid colors. Body colors include black, gray, chestnut, sorrel, bay, brown, blue roan, bay roan, red roan, grullo, dun, red dun, buckskin, palomino, cremello, perlino, smoky cream, gold champagne, amber champagne and classic champagne.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: A stock horse-type build: balanced, structurally correct and well-muscled. Ideally, Paint Horses have attractive heads, refined throat latches and trim necks, long and sloping shoulders, deep heart girths, short and strong backs, and long hips and croups, as well as straight and correct legs. They're known for having muscular forearms, chests, shoulders, stifles and gaskins.

ASSOCIATION: American Paint Horse Association
www.apha.com

Paso FINO

This smooth-gaited horse from South America wows with spirit and rideability.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

Imagine gliding down the trail, oblivious to rough terrain, without worrying about hours spent in the saddle causing back pain. This isn't just a dream for the fortunate owners of Paso Finos. Born with a naturally smooth gait that creates almost no movement for the rider, they're the perfect way to travel down the trail, especially over long distances.

Developed in the Caribbean and Latin America from Spanish horses that were imported to the Americas, the Paso Fino is known for its smooth, four-beat lateral gait, which can be performed at three speeds. The classic *fino* is slow in forward movement, but the feet take very quick steps. The *paso corto* has medium speed and stride. The *paso largo* moves forward the fastest, with a longer stride.

The Paso Fino is prized for its gentle spiritedness and incredible stamina. The combination makes for a popular trail and endurance horse.

TODAY'S PASO FINO

Today, the Paso Fino Horse Association (PFHA) has over 60,000 registered horses and 3,500 members in 21 regions.

Recently, the PFHA held the International Mundial Championships in Miami, Fla., where horses from Colombia, Puerto Rico, Aruba, the Dominican Republic, and the U.S. competed. Classes were streamed on the USEF Network, with over 80,000 views from around the world—the most-watched event the network has ever had.

Trail riding is so popular within the breed that the PFHA created the Trail Horse Test Program. This gives riders a chance to demonstrate their horse's skill at trail obstacles through a series of tests. It's not a competition, but rather a way to gauge a horse's ability to "complete tasks normally performed before, during, and after a trail ride." There are three different levels—junior, senior and master—and awards are earned after successfully completing each level.

The PFHA has other recreational rider programs that reward Paso Fino owners who hit the trails. These programs include awards for recreational riding, competitive trail, endurance rides, long-distance pleasure rides, and more. HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 13 to 15.2 hands

COLOR: Every horse color can be found in the breed, including pinto patterns.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: A straight or slightly convex facial profile. Their necks are medium in length, gracefully arched and set on an angle that allows for a high head carriage. The back is strong and muscular with a rounded croup.

ASSOCIATIONS:

American Paso Fino Horse Association
www.americanpasofino.com

Paso Fino Horse Association
www.pfha.org

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

KELLY POWERS/RED MANE CREATIVE

Peruvian HORSE

This smooth-gaited beauty from South America makes the perfect partner for hitting the trails.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

Like many of the great breeds that have come from the Americas, the Peruvian Horse has its roots in Spanish horses brought over centuries ago. Because Peru is so isolated, the horses left by the Spanish were not crossed with a lot of outside blood, resulting in a lovely gaited horse that reflects its deep lineage.

The Peruvian gait is a four-beat lateral movement with a foot sequence of left hind, left fore, right hind, right fore. The slower speed is called the *paso llano,* while the faster gait is called the *sobreandando*.

PERUVIANS IN NORTH AMERICA

Currently, the North American Peruvian Horse Association (NAPHA) says there are roughly 20,000 Peruvians in North America, with the number holding steady.

"It's a unique breed, and a lot of people don't know anything about it," shares Mark Renn, president of the NAPHA. He got into the breed because of his bad back. "They're fantastic horses. They are born gaited, so you don't have to worry about screwing up the gait. It feels good knowing the horse has it in them right away, rather than trying to put it in them. And I liked their size." He has a two-month-old colt that can be seen doing the *paso llano* alongside his mother.

The NAPHA celebrates Peruvian Horse owners that get out and enjoy their horses. They have several programs for recreational riders to earn awards for things like trail rides, open shows, and parades—anything that gets the breed out and seen.

One free program is their High Hour Rider, awarded to riders hitting hour milestones as well as the rider with the highest number of riding hours in a year.

PROUD OWNERS

Many people have discovered the joys of trail riding with a gaited horse. Larry Eades from Oregon is one such Peruvian owner. He and his wife, Anne, have been riding them for 12 years.

"A famous endurance rider, Julie Suhr, once said that as you get older, you need a horse that is smaller, smoother, and safer," Larry says. "We found those qualities in our Peruvians. Plus, they are spirited but tractable."

Larry has been competing in International Mountain Trail Challenge Association's trail challenges for a decade with his Peruvians and has enjoyed every ride.

"The horses seem to like the challenge and accomplishment," he shares. "They are very enthusiastic when they conquer difficult obstacles like the suspension bridge, the pond, or the balance beam. It asks the best of them: courage, energy, and focus."

A LIFETIME OF TRAINING AND SHOWING

For Nicole Brass, Peruvians have been a part of her life since she was young girl. Her parents started breeding them in 1972, and she showed them as a young girl.

"Peruvian Horses have always been my passion, and I am now grateful to train, breed, show and trail ride them," says Brass. "I prefer working with them over all other gaited and non-gaited breeds I have worked with for their kind nature, big personalities, willingness to please, their temperament—which thrives when bonded with a human—and for their completely natural and smooth gait."

Brass has been very successful with her Peruvian Horses in the breed show ring.

"The same horses who have won titles have carried us countless hours down the trail in the mountains of Idaho," she says. "Their *brio*, which is a willingness to please and travel as smoothly, quickly and as long as the rider wishes to, makes them an ideal trail mount and highlights why they are my ride of choice."

The best part? "I can spend eight hours a day in the saddle and end my day feeling refreshed!" HI

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 14.1 to 15.1 hands

COLOR: The breed comes in a number of colors, including bay, black, brown, buckskin, chestnut, dun, gray, grulla, palomino and roan.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Compact and elegant, Peruvians have a medium-sized head with straight or slightly concave facial profile and a small muzzle. Their backs are strong, rounded and short to medium in length. The croup is long, wide and moderately sloped, and nicely rounded.

ASSOCIATION:
North American Peruvian Horse Association
www.napha.net

American QUARTER HORSE

The go-to horse for ranch work is also recognized in the performance pen.

BY KATE BRADLEY BYARS

The western performance horse industry is growing like wildfire, with new followers not only zeroing in on their favorite rodeo, cow horse, reining or cutting rider, but also the horses helping those riders to some of the highest-earning purses the equine industry has ever seen awarded. Most of those riders are sitting on an American Quarter Horse.

When it comes to roping and riding on the ranch, the American Quarter Horse is king.

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

When the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) officially launched in 1940, several ranch breeders were the initial registrants and members. Those ranches, like King Ranch in Kingsville, Texas—the owner of the first registered horse, Wimpy—were drivers in the industry.

The AQHA Executive Committee meeting minutes from April 22, 1940, read: *All Quarter Horses must be able to run a quarter of a mile in 23 seconds or show that they are capable of Quarter Horse performance under ranch conditions.*

In 2022, King Ranch and Waggoner Ranch, located in Vernon, Texas, were recognized by AQHA as 100-year breeders. Those ranches not only kick-started the breed, but today continue to influence the horses competing.

The breed has evolved to include horses that show in hunter under saddle, western pleasure, dressage, and are driven under lines. Yet, the basis of the breed remains their foundation characteristics of cow savvy, athleticism, and trainability.

FIRST, A COW HORSE

The list of stallions that have impacted the Quarter Horse breed is long, and among them is Doc Bar. Bred for speed, the chestnut stallion was born in 1956, sired by Lighting Bar and out of the mare Dandy Doll, a daughter of Texas Dandy.

In the halter arena, Doc Bar was a champion, but it would be his offspring that truly influenced the future horses bound to compete in the National Cutting Horse Association, National Reining Horse Association,

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

The Quarter Horse is made in the USA, and is now the most popular breed both in America and worldwide.

National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA), and the versatility ranch horse arena.

"They were great horses," says NRCHA Hall of Famer Bobby Ingersoll of Doc Bar foals. "They were great then and would be great today. They were athletic, quick-footed, had a lot of cow instinct and were quick to train. I showed the first Doc Bar foal at the NCHA Futurity, I'm pretty proud of that. [Cow horses] had a lot of old foundation breeding, [but] when Doc Bar came [along] we had a little different type of horse, and they were pretty horses, too. Who doesn't want to ride a pretty one?"

Looking at the performance horse industry, you can still trace Doc Bar bloodlines to the winners in nearly every discipline. The 2023 NRCHA World's Greatest Horseman Champion Phillip Ralls rode Call Me Mitch to the title, and the roan stallion is by Metallic Cat and out of the Docs Hickory (by Doc Bar) daughter Miss Hickory Hill.

"Doc Bar brought the look," recalls Bill Enk, NRCHA Hall of Fame member, trainer and NRCHA director of judges. "The eye appeal box [on a score card] was for Doc Bars. They looked at a cow, they got around on one and looked pretty doing it. The Doc Bar line is still on a lot of pedigrees. He has influenced an industry."

RANCH TO ARENA

Today, ranch riding is one of the most entered events in the AQHA. With the addition of the AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse World Championship Show and the inclusion of the stand-alone ranch riding class at the AQHA World Championship Show, horses bred, raised and used on the ranch have a place to compete. The ranch horses "shine up" to hit the show pen.

Jessica Rumbaugh and her gelding, Boonfull Of Caesar, who has Doc Bar on both sides of his pedigree, won the 2018 AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse Amateur World Champion title. The gray gelding may look sharp showing, but he's also been known to push Rumbaugh's grass-fed beef cattle around on their former El Campo, Texas, ranch.

"I bought him as a cutting horse, but his athleticism made adding the other classes for versatility—ranch riding, ranch reining, working cow horse and ranch conformation—easy to do," says Rumbaugh. "He is just a great horse."

Aboard Lil Trash Talk, another Doc Bar descendent, Texas trainer Bud Lyon captured the 2020 AQHA Junior Ranch Riding World Champion title and the 2021 AQHA Senior Ranch Riding World Champion title. The sorrel horse was bred by Brooke Wharton, who grew up on the Waggoner Ranch. It's that connection between today's show horse and the base members of the breed that continues to drive the Quarter Horse's evolution on the ranch and in the show pen.

Where the Quarter Horse excels is showcasing the versatility of the breed, especially in the western performance horse classes. With the growth in today's cow horse, cutting, reining and ranch horse events, the breed may be moving farther away from the original stallions (like Doc Bar) on paper, but the characteristics of the horses remain true to the breed's standard. HI

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

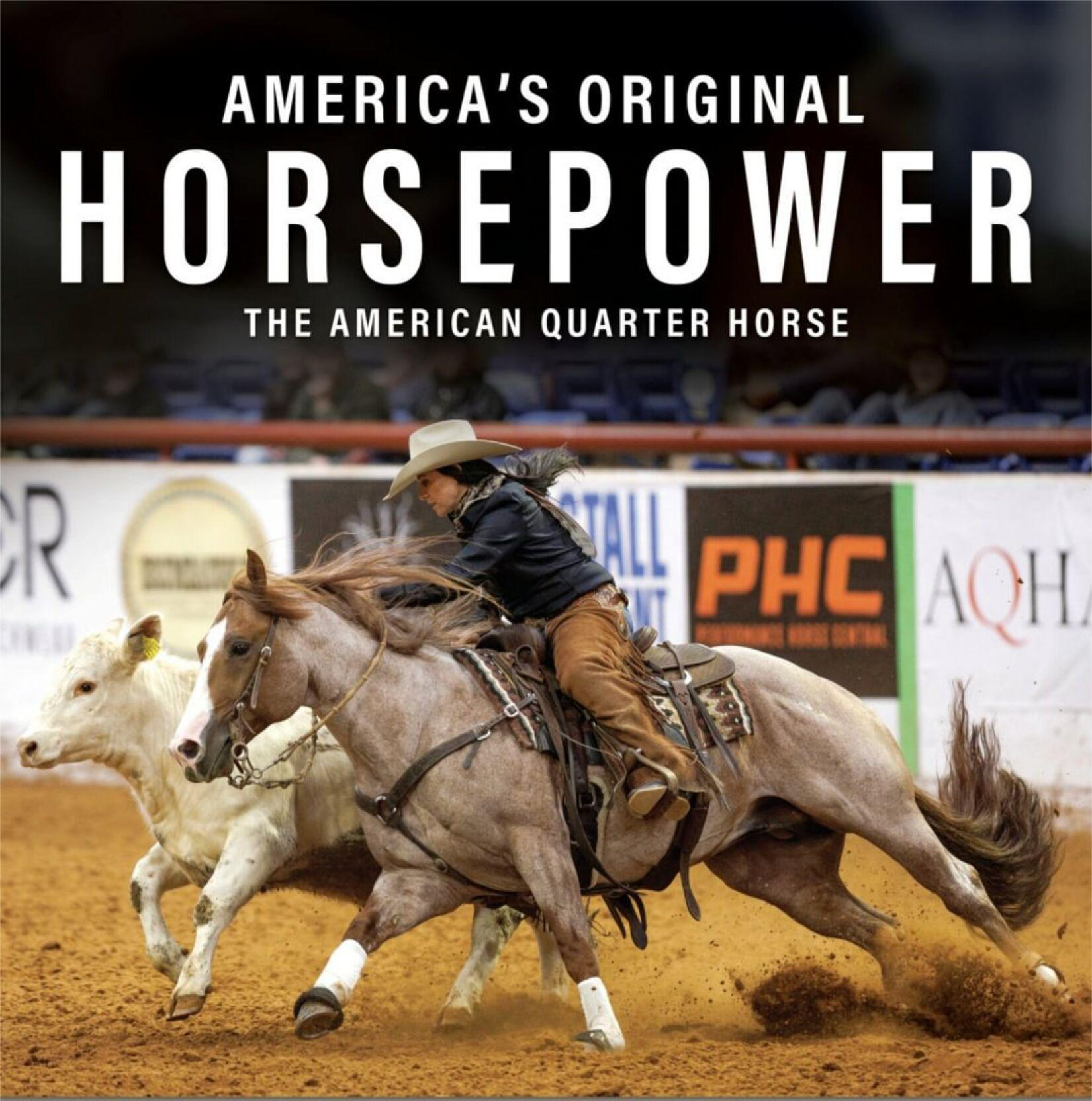
FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: Typically between 14 and 16 hands.

COLORS: Sorrel, bay, and gray are most common, but Quarter Horses can be found in all solid colors, including buckskin, dun, palomino and grulla.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Stout and strong, with a broad chest and well-muscled hindquarters. The head and neck are set low—a necessary attribute for cattle work.

ASSOCIATION: The American Quarter Horse Association
www.aqha.com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It is physical, spiritual and emotional. It calls to us in different ways, but the result is the same.
A fever that is never really cured. This lifestyle isn't a choice, it is a calling.

AQHA
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aqha.com

ROCKY MOUNTAIN Horse

This smooth-gaited breed is ideal for all members of the family, whether beginners, endurance riders or drivers.

BY SAMANTHA JOHNSON

The Rocky Mountain region of the United States is notable for its breathtaking mountainous beauty, but despite what you might think, it's not the birthplace of the Rocky Mountain Horse.

Surprised?

The Rocky Mountain Horse actually got its start in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky—much further east than the Rocky Mountains—during the late 1800s, with the aim of developing an ideal saddle horse. These early Rocky Mountain Horses were beloved by families in rural communities thanks to their kind dispositions, hardiness, stamina, athleticism and versatility. These valuable traits provided the framework for an endearing and enduring breed.

COURTESY RMHA

THE MAKING OF THE BREED

What about the name, though? As the story goes, the breed was named for one of its foundation stallions, a horse that did come from the Rocky Mountains and was known in Kentucky as, simply, the Rocky Mountain Horse.

The name stuck, and the breed was developed from descendants of the original Rocky Mountain Horse. The breed gained a reputation for its smooth, four-beat lateral gait that is easy to ride, making them well-loved for pleasure riding.

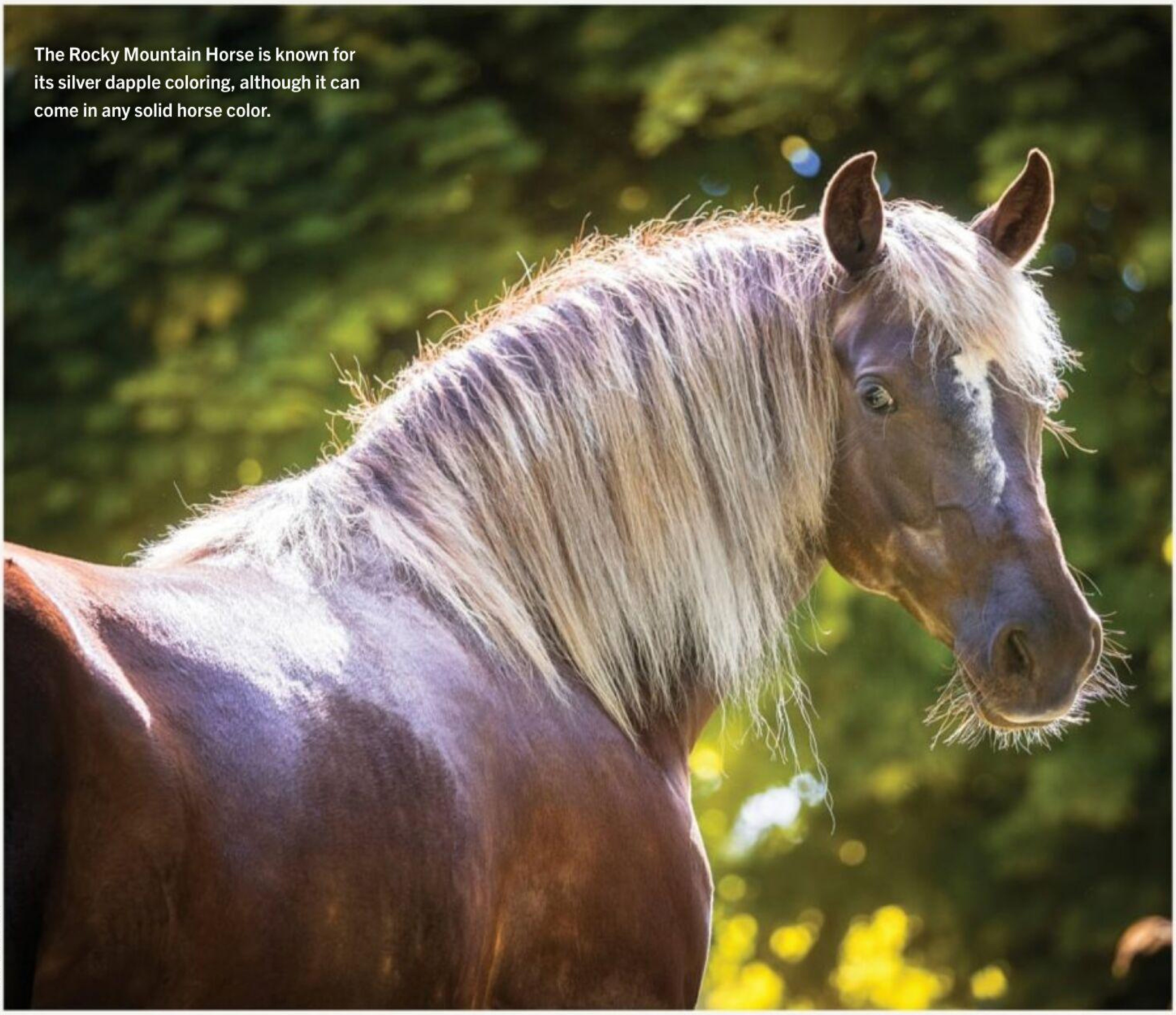
But the original foundation stallion wasn't the only major influence on the breed. Another influential stallion named Tobe made quite a colorful impact on the breed during the mid-1900s, cementing the breed's iconic chocolate-colored coat paired with flaxen mane and tail. Today, this popular coloring is commonly associated with Rocky Mountain Horses, due in part to the influence of Tobe, who was also a gaited horse.

Aside from its famous color (technically called "silver dapple"), you'll also find Rocky Mountain Horses in a rainbow of additional colors from black and bay to chestnut and roan. White markings are minimal in the breed and not encouraged. In terms of size, Rocky Mountain Horses range from 14 to 16 hands and weigh about 1,000 pounds.

HAVING FUN WITH ROCKIES

It's easy to fall in love with the beauty of the Rocky Mountain Horse, but you'll also quickly discover the breed's many other qualities, including its suitability for a variety of disciplines. Want to drive? Trail ride? Compete in pleasure classes? Participate in long-distance rides? The versatile Rocky can do it all, with the talent and stamina to be your partner every step of the way.

This delightful breed has everything you need in an equine partner, so if you love gaited horses with stunning good looks, a gentle disposition, trainability and talent, look no further, because you've found the perfect match. HI



The Rocky Mountain Horse is known for its silver dapple coloring, although it can come in any solid horse color.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

TERRI CAGE/ADOBE STOCK

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 14 to 16 hands

COLOR: Any solid horse color

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Medium boned; wide, deep chest; sloping shoulders. Bold eyes with face neither dished nor convex, and medium in size. Neck medium length and gracefully arched.

ASSOCIATION:
Rocky Mountain Horse Association
www.RMHorse.com

American SADDLEBRED

The versatile American Saddlebred has lots more to offer than its trademark show-ring flash.

BY LESLIE POTTER

American Saddlebreds have an unmistakable presence wherever they go, and they can be found just about everywhere in the equestrian world. Though best known for their breathtaking performances in the show ring, this breed has earned devoted admirers across disciplines.

Fans of the breed often describe their horses' people-oriented nature, which couples with their natural athleticism to make them an excellent choice for trail riding, ranch work, and sports like eventing and dressage, where the partnership between horse and rider is of the utmost importance.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Originally known as the Kentucky Saddler and later the American Saddle Horse, the American Saddlebred traces its early development back to the 1700s, when colonists in North America selectively bred Thoroughbreds with a now-extinct gaited breed known as the Narragansett Pacer to produce a robust riding horse. Throughout the 1800s, breeders continued to refine the Kentucky Saddler through crosses with Thoroughbreds, Hackneys and Morgans, among others.

In the 19th century, Saddlers were valued as battlefield mounts for generals who prized their stamina and willingness to perform for their riders. Fortunately, the 1800s also saw the rise of horse shows in America, and during peacetime, the breed maintained its popularity in civilian life at these early exhibitions, particularly in Kentucky and Missouri.

The American Saddle Horse Breeders Association was founded as the official breed registry in 1891, and today is called the American Saddlebred Horse & Breeders Association (ASHBA). The Association has the distinction of being the first registry for a breed of horse developed in America, and continues to support and promote the beauty, athleticism, and versatility of the breed in all its modern uses.

Through its annual High Point Awards Program, ASHBA recognizes American Saddlebreds and half-Saddlebreds competing in all disciplines. The American Saddlebred Versatility Association (VERSA) is a charter club of ASHBA that was incorporated in 2013. VERSA's mission is to promote the versatile character of the American Saddlebred Horse by highlighting opportunities to compete in many equestrian disciplines and to educate the public about Saddlebred versatility.

EVENTING WITH SADDLEBREDS

Kris Wallace is the owner and trainer at Columbia Equestrian Center in Columbia, Mo., where she works with a variety of breeds and teaches several disciplines. She's developed a love of the American Saddlebred and the sport of eventing, and Wallace has earned a reputation for success in training and competing Saddlebred event horses. Among the Saddlebreds she has competed are Absolute Lionheart (aka "Dan") and Cat on a Mission ("Cora").

"Both of them were previously saddle seat mounts," says Wallace. "Dan did show hunt seat and jumping with his previous owner after she realized he wasn't going to be her saddle seat mount, but neither of them had any eventing experience. Since we've had them, Cora has competed up to the Novice level [2'11"] and Dan up to Preliminary [3'7"]."

Both horses have big personalities and athleticism that have earned them fans in the competitive

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Trainer Kris Wallace has developed a love for the American Saddlebred and the sport of eventing (shown here on Dan).

LESLIE POTTER

arena and in the barn. "Dan loves to be the center of attention," says Wallace. "He's sweet, affectionate, and highly opinionated. Cross-country is his absolute favorite [eventing] phase. Cora is every bit of a red-headed mare. She acts big and bad, but secretly loves attention. When ridden, she is 100 percent business and loves to work."

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: Typically 15.1 to 16.3 hands.

COLOR: All colors are permitted, including pinto. Chestnut, bay, and black are most common.

GAITS: All Saddlebreds can walk, trot, and canter. Some are also able to perform the slow gait and rack, which are smooth yet animated four-beat gaits.

ASSOCIATIONS: American Saddlebred Horse & Breeders Association
www.saddlebred.com

American Saddlebred Versatility Association
saddlebredversatility.org

A SADDLEBRED FOR ANY ROLE

During her junior exhibitor career, Wallace primarily rode and showed Arabians in hunter/jumper classes. She was introduced to the American Saddlebred when she attended William Woods University in Fulton, Mo., which boasts a multi-discipline equestrian program that includes many Saddlebreds. When she started her own training and lesson program, they were a natural fit.

"I feel that Saddlebreds have excellent qualities as sport horses," she says. "They are extremely athletic, trainable, and love being challenged. They tend to be forward and brave, which helps them be successful in many different sport horse arenas. Most importantly, they all have very big hearts, which keeps them trying in any situation."

As a trainer who works with youth and amateurs, Wallace has an eye for matching riders with horses that will help them achieve their goals and have fun doing it. She finds that Saddlebreds are often a great fit.

"I think when a Saddlebred discovers a job they love, they're so focused on pleasing that it's not hard for them to take care of their rider," says Wallace. "Saddlebreds all seem to be the barn favorites, as they give their riders confidence to push themselves out of their comfort zone knowing they are on a brave, intelligent horse." HI

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THE Standardbred

Much more than a racehorse, the gentle-natured Standardbred also pulls its weight under saddle in a variety of disciplines.

BY ANNA SOCHOCKY

Today's harness racing trotters and pacers can do a lot more than pull a sulky at high speeds. Standardbreds retiring from off the track suit riders of all levels in disciplines ranging from dressage and barrel racing to fox hunting and reining.

MORE THAN A RACEHORSE

Helene Gregory grew up riding Standardbreds in Sweden. Though she and her husband, Jeff Gregory, a well-known harness racing trainer and driver, breed these horses to race, Helene developed an obsession with this often-overlooked breed.

MARK HALL/COURTESY USTA

Standardbreds are best known on the racetrack, but they have a calm temperament perfect for second careers under saddle.

"I'm a big advocate for getting these horses when they're done on the track," Helene says. "I like to pursue new careers, and they're so good at it. The sky is the limit. Standardbreds enjoy working—they do anything you ask of them, and do it eagerly. They are the blue-collar workers of the equine breeds."

BREED HISTORY

A melting pot of equine bloodlines, the Standardbred's origins begin with a gray Thoroughbred stallion named Messenger, foaled in England in 1780. Imported to the United States eight years later in 1788, Messenger stood at stud for 20 seasons and demonstrated an unparalleled ability to sire trotters in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York.

Though Messenger was bred to produce athletic and speedy horses, it would be his great-grandson, Hambletonian 10, who ignited the spark for the Standardbred breed and claims the title of foundation sire.

Hambletonian 10 sired over 1,300 offspring. A mix of breeds were introduced into his line, including Thoroughbreds, Morgans, Canadian pacers, and other pacing and trotting horses.

Bred in two lines—trotters and pacers—Standardbreds introduced racing to the everyday person. Races between neighbors on village roads soon blossomed in major cities, where locals cleared streets for rivalries.

Gaited pacers run in a two-beat lateral gait, moving legs on the same side in unison. Trotters race in the traditional diagonal gait, moving opposite pairs of legs together.

The National Association of Trotting Horse Breeders created the Standardbred's official registry

RENEE CASAVANT/CREEK DREAMS PHOTOGRAPHY

in 1879. The Association's requirement for the breed maintained that a horse be able to trot or pace a mile in 2 minutes and 30 seconds. This "standard" led to the name Standardbred.

FROM TRACK TO PATROL

The unruffled personality of the Standardbred is well-suited to many professions, including police mounts. Mounted horse patrols can be found riding drafts and draft-crosses in many cities across the United States, but in Newark, N.J., the breed of choice is the Standardbred.

Officer Luis Camacho is the instructor and trainer for officers in the department's mounted patrol. Working with the Standardbred Retirement Foundation, Camacho helps adopt and retrain surrendered horses for police work.

"We stick to the same build and color of the horses to maintain uniformity of the patrol," says Camacho. "We want to look the same every day to the community. The Standardbred has a consistent temperament needed to perform police work. It's a sturdy horse and tends to accept the city environment."

Newark Police mounted officers patrol residential neighborhoods, business districts, and community events like parades, festivals, and concerts because they can cover more ground than a team of officers on foot.

"We're in a city, so it's very noisy," Camacho explains. "EMS ambulances, buses, you name it, they hear it. I think it helps to work with horses coming off the track because they're not sitting for a long time in a stall."

Mounted patrol officers receive six weeks of training. Riding instruction and basic horsemanship protocols, including primary care and feeding of the horse, prepare them for a partnership with their assigned mount.

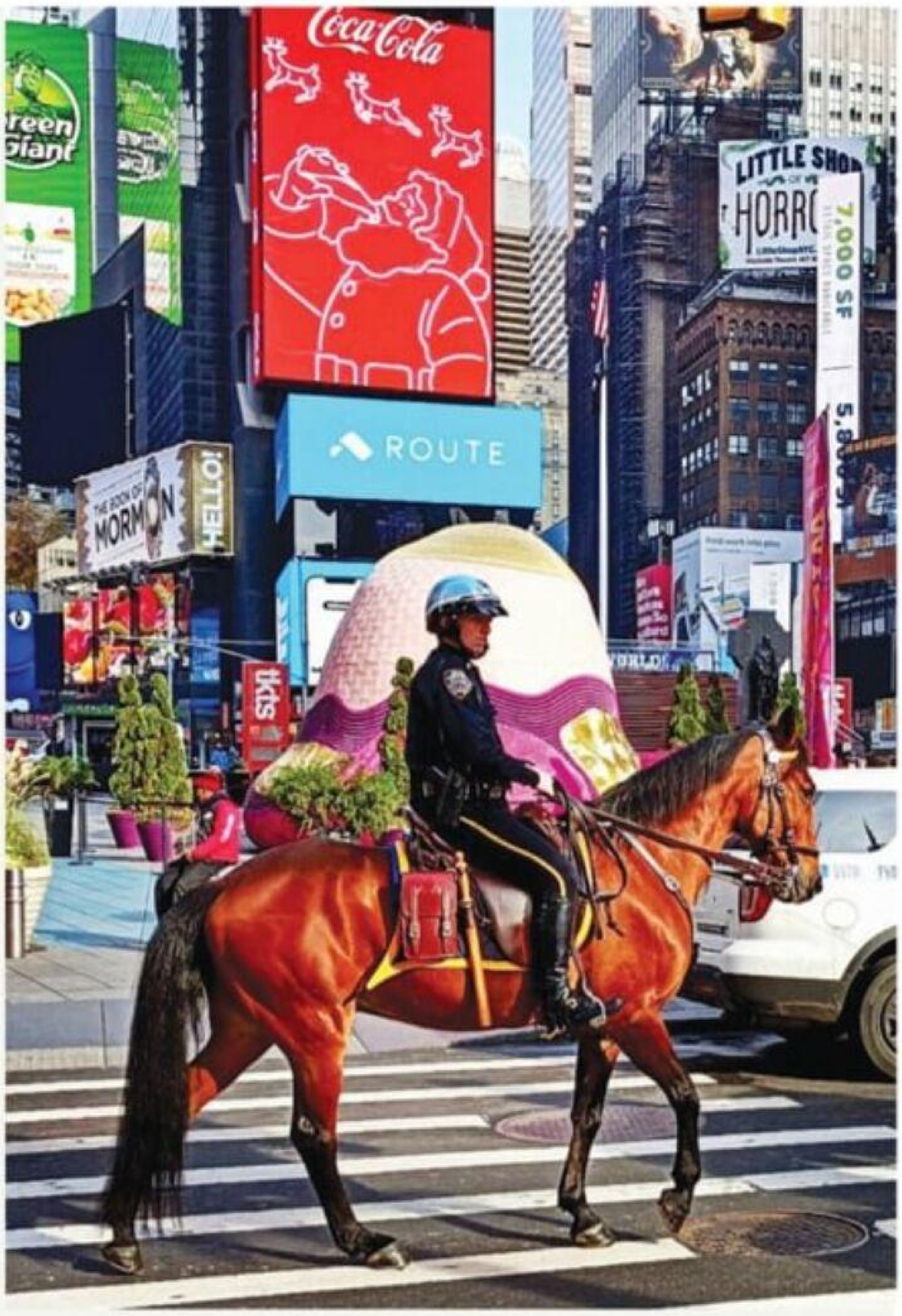
FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 14.2-15.3 hands

COLORS: Bay, chestnut, black, gray, and roan

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Well-muscled sloping shoulders; deep, flat hindquarters; high croup; well-defined withers; muscular, slightly arched neck; refined head with a straight or convex profile.

ASSOCIATION:
United States Trotting Association
ustrotting.com



COURTESY NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

New York City Police officer Kyle McLaughlin and his Standardbred mount, Blaze, look out for traffic in Times Square.

ANYTHING BUT STANDARD

A Standardbred makes a wonderful choice for novice riders who may choose the trail or casual riding over the competition ring. They are smaller than Thoroughbreds and warmbloods, which can make them more accessible for timid riders who prefer a smaller mount.

Although the breed sports a robust and durable body type, their calm temperament, high tolerance for rider mistakes, and willingness to please people outshines all its physical attributes.

Mary Minkoff is a longtime board member and volunteer at Sunshine Horses, Inc., one of the leading Standardbred Aftercare Facilities in New York State. She also owns a Standardbred named Hucklebuck (aka "Huck"), and believes the thinking that these horses can only succeed on the track is outdated.

"The breed has the potential to excel in any discipline," says Minkoff. "People realize that they don't need to have a Thoroughbred or a Quarter Horse to do a particular job." HI

DO YOU HAVE A STANDARDBRED?

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Renee Casavant - Creek Dreams Photography

Amber Lemery Photo

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For more information on the Standardbred Incentive Program, visit *LifeAfterRacing.ustrotting.com*

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CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Tennessee WALKING HORSE

A willing personality and an easy-to-ride gait make this breed an American favorite.

BY KRISTINA LOTZ

There may be no greater bliss than a trail ride—especially on the back of a Tennessee Walking Horse. Their unique gaits have made them increasingly popular as trail mounts.

The breed performs three distinct gaits. The flat walk is a brisk, long-reaching walk that ranges from 4 to 8 mph. A nodding head motion, along with overstride, are unique features of the gait. The running walk is an extra-smooth gait like the flat walk except faster, at 10 to 20 mph, giving the rider a feeling of gliding through the air as if propelled by a powerful machine. The canter is performed in much the same way as other breeds, but with lots of spring and rhythm, giving an easy front end rise and fall referred to as a "rocking chair" canter.

The Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association (TWHBEA) currently has 234,418 registered Walkers, and many of them hit the trails annually through TWHBEA's trail programs. In 2023, riders logged 13,438 total hours in the distance program.

HOURS IN THE SADDLE

Via's Sugerfoot, owned and ridden by Glory Redmond of Lowell, Ind., was the TWHBEA Trail Horse of the Year for 2023, logging 387.5 hours.

Sunday Morning Rain and owner Susan St. Amand have logged more than 3,000 hours on trails, more than any other Tennessee Walking Horse in TWHBEA's program.

"We ride on the hundreds of miles of ATV public trails in the Northern Maine woods, and witness plenty of wildlife," says St. Amand.

"The Tennessee Walking Horse has long been recognized as a superior trail mount because they are smart, strong, surefooted and smooth," says Paige Liggett of TWHBEA. "The Tennessee Walking Horse was originally bred to be a utility horse capable of carrying a rider over the rolling hills of Middle Tennessee in comfort and style. This inherent ability translates perfectly to most any terrain or situation."

FROM TRAILS TO MOUNTED ARCHERY

Lila Corey of Youngsville, N.C., owns three Tennessee Walking Horses that she uses for trail riding and mounted archery. Her 9-year-old mare, Patience; 9-year-old gelding, Lakota; and 18-year-old gelding, Aston, are all skilled on the trail as well as the archery track. They carry both her students and her granddaughter with ease and care.

"I trail ride for fun and relaxation," says Corey. "Tennessee Walking Horses are very smooth, and that makes them easier to shoot off of when cantering. The hunt course, being like a trail ride with targets at a canter, is so much fun on a gaited horse."

Kristin Munson from Sandia Park, N.M., grew up riding Tennessee Walking Horses.

"I can't post worth a darn," she laughs. "That's a pretty necessary skill for most long-distance riders, unless they are lucky enough to ride gaited!"

FAST FACTS

HEIGHT: 14.3 to 17 hands

COLOR: All horse colors; pinto and roan patterns.

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Straight facial profile with small ears; a long, sloping shoulder and hip; short back; short, strong coupling. Bottom line is longer than the topline.

ASSOCIATIONS:
Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association
www.twhbea.com

COURTESY GLORY REDMOND

Glory Redmond and Via's Sugarfoot, 2023 TWHBEA Horse of the Year. The pair is pictured in Missouri on a cross-country trail ride.

Now, Munson rides Cruise Until Midnyte, aka "Cruze," a 5-year-old gelding, on endurance rides.

"Tennessee Walking Horses are known for being level-headed, considerate of their riders, gentle, and comfortable for long periods of time," she says. "Because they were bred for riding on extensive plantations in the south, especially Heritage Walkers [these have no or limited high-stepping breeding lines] are famous for traveling long miles without complaint and being a joy to ride."

COURTESY TWHBEA

The smooth, ground-covering gait of the Tennessee Walking Horse makes it the ideal choice for trail riding.

Since Cruze is young, Munson is competing in the American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC) limited-distance races, ranging from 25 to 35 miles. As he grows up, her goal is to complete the 100-mile Western States Trail Ride (also known as the Tevis Cup). She says that Arabians and Mustangs tend to win endurance rides, but she and Cruze enjoy the time together.

"I believe the AERC motto that 'To Finish is to Win,' and I wouldn't want to spend 35, 50, or even 100 miles on any other breed!"

MOUNTED ORIENTEERING

Pushers Phoenix Sun, affectionately called "Nacho," is a 12-year-old Walking Horse gelding owned by Laurie Heffington of Winlock, Wash. She purchased Nacho sight unseen from British Columbia because she had been searching for years for a gaited horse.

A friend of hers got her into competitive mounted orienteering (CMO) a few years ago. In mounted orienteering, a team or individual uses a compass to find hidden objects—usually a paper plate with a letter on it—on a trail. The event is timed. Heffington has found Nacho to be the perfect partner.

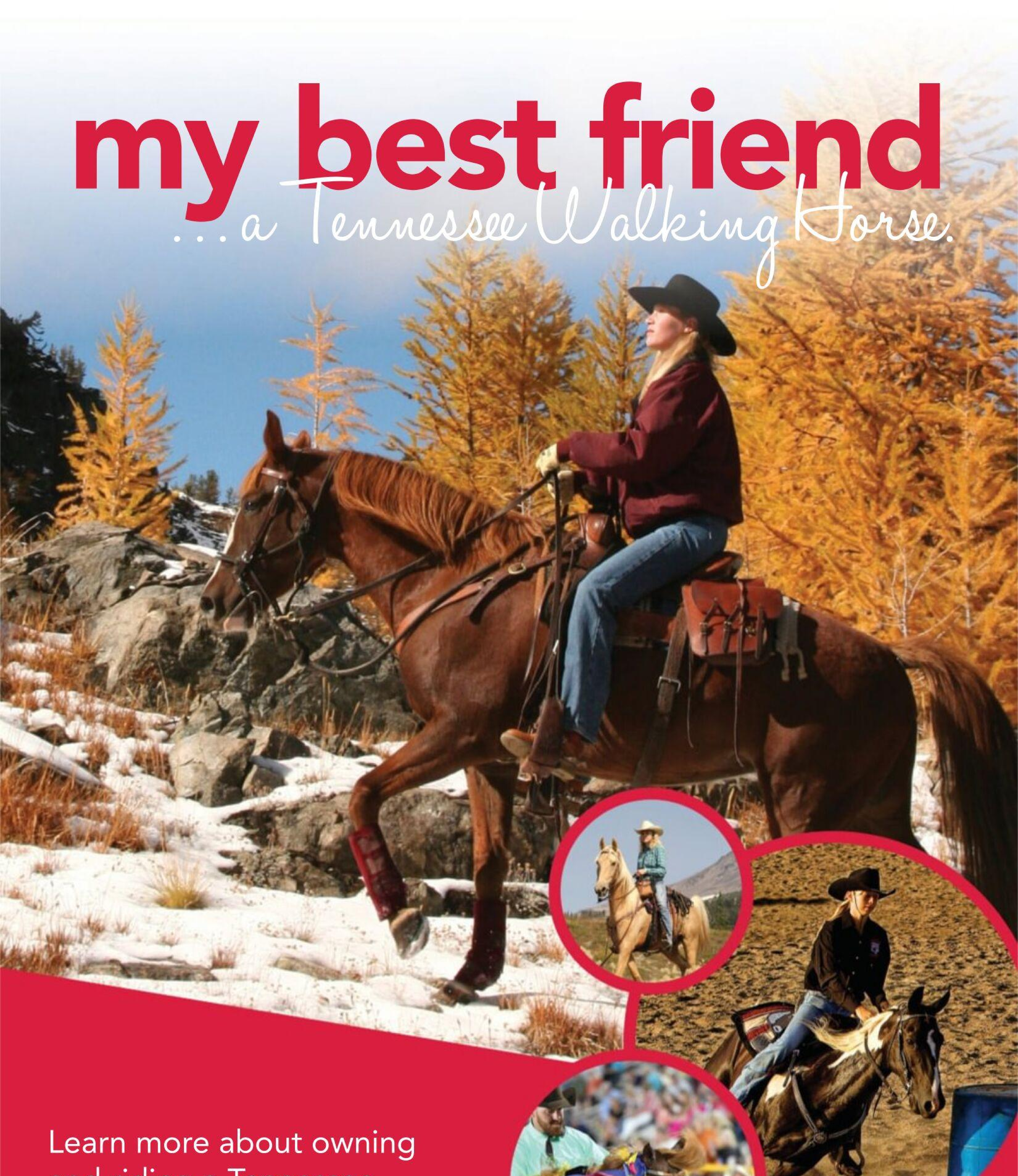
"From what Nacho has shown, they have wonderful personality and grit," says Heffington. "He can go and go. My husband calls him 'The Bulldozer,' because he will plow through anything I point him at, regardless if there's a path. That is great when we're searching around in the brush for a plate!"

Heffington and Nacho placed first in the Washington Chapter of CMO for the short course and second in the nation in 2022 and 2023.

Although Tennessee Walking Horses are known for their fast running walk, Heffington says that Nacho has no problem slowing down, and will even keep pace with her son's 12-hand pony on the trail. HI

ASHLYNN WINTER

Lauri Heffington and Nacho at a local competitive mounted orienteering (CMO) event.



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TWHBEA
Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association℠

The THOROUGHBRED

Known for their need for speed, there's much more to this fleet-footed breed than meets the eye.

BY AUDREY PAVIA

The Thoroughbred is the fastest horse in the world, and it's no wonder. Since the 1700s, Thoroughbreds have been bred for pure speed.

First developed in England strictly for the purpose of racing, the Thoroughbred began with three foundation stallions: the Darley Arabian, the Godolphin Arabian and the Byerley Turk. Named after the men who owned them, these stallions were born in the Middle East and brought to England at the turn of the 18th century. They were bred with hardy native mares.

The horses that resulted from these crossings proved to be very fast over long distances. The British aristocracy had discovered the sport of horse racing, and the Thoroughbred became a favorite.

Selective breeding made the Thoroughbred faster and faster with each generation, and in 1791, James Weatherby researched and published the first volume of the breed's *General Stud Book*. The book featured the pedigrees of 387 mares that could be traced back to one of the three original foundation stallions.

Since then, the Thoroughbred breed has become synonymous with professional horse racing around the world. When people think of racehorses, they think of the Thoroughbred. Household names such as Man o' War, Seabiscuit and Secretariat made racing a favorite American pastime.

MORE THAN SPEED

The Thoroughbred has been a racehorse for centuries, yet it turns out this amazing breed can do a lot more than run. An organization called the Retired Racehorse Project (RRP) has had a hand in proving that Thoroughbreds bred for racing are also incredibly versatile as sport horses, and they can excel in a variety of disciplines.

Jen Roytz, executive director of the RRP, has seen this firsthand and knows why.

"So much careful thought, research and planning goes into the mating that produces each Thoroughbred with the goal of creating an elite equine athlete," she says. "During their formative years, they are raised and cared for with that same goal in mind, and as a result receive proper nutrition and care as they develop."

This care, combined with centuries of careful breeding, results in a very athletic horse, according to Roytz. And while the goal for most Thoroughbreds is to be a superior athlete on the track, racing is not the only good use of its athleticism.

"Their agility, stamina, adaptability and versatility make them well-suited for a variety of sports outside of racing," she says.

THOROUGHBRED MAKEOVER

Launched in 2012, the RPP's annual Thoroughbred Makeover event is held in Kentucky. The Makeover now names champions in 10 disciplines: barrel racing, competitive trail, dressage, eventing, show jumping, show hunter, field hunter, polo, ranch work and freestyle (a free-form division).

More people are starting to recognize the value of the breed in different sports. Other organizations are also aware of this. There is the Jockey Club's Trainer Incentive Program (TIP), which encourages the retraining of retired Thoroughbred racehorses for other disciplines. Likewise, the TAKE2 Second Career Thoroughbred Program is run by the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association and the New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc.

It can be breathtaking to watch a Thoroughbred run at full speed on the track, but it can be just as impressive to see one of these athletes perform a flawless dressage test or soar over an oxer in a show jumping class. Whatever the sport, Thoroughbreds are proving they remain the horse world's finest athletes. HI

CHERYL ANN QUIGLEY/ADOBE STOCK

The Thoroughbred Makeover in Lexington, Ky., awards winners in second-career disciplines, such as show jumping.

FAST **FACTS**

HEIGHT: 15.3 to 17 hands

COLOR: Bay, chestnut, black, brown, gray

OVERALL APPEARANCE: Refined head, long neck, high withers, deep shoulder, long legs, powerfully muscled hip and thigh.

RESOURCES: The Jockey Club
www.jockeyclub.com

Retired Racehorse Project
www.retiredracehorseproject.org

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Welsh Pony

With four types to choose from, the Welsh suits children and adults alike.

BY SAMANTHA JOHNSON

The original home of the Welsh Mountain Pony was in the hills and valleys of Wales, pre-dating the Roman Empire. Harsh winters, rugged terrain and sparse vegetation yielded a pony with soundness, endurance and a high degree of intelligence.

All Welsh Ponies and Cobs found in the United States today are descended from animals registered with the Welsh Pony & Cob Society in the U.K. While Welsh ponies were imported to America as early as the 1880s, the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of America (www.wpcsa.org) was not established as a breed registry until 1906. To date, over 45,000 Welsh ponies and cobs have been registered.

Welsh Ponies and Cobs are well-known for their friendly personalities and even temperaments. The breed is divided into four sections based on size and type: Section A, the Welsh Mountain Pony; Section B, the Welsh Pony; Section C, the Welsh Pony of Cob Type; and Section D, the Welsh Cob.

Considered as a group, Welsh Ponies and Cobs range in size from under 11 hands to over 16 hands. Size requirements for the sections differ by region of the world. All four sections possess characteristics that are inherently Welsh: kindness, trainability, athleticism, hardiness, beauty, and good movement.

SECTION A: THE WELSH MOUNTAIN PONY

Up to 12.2 hands in the U.S.

Although some still inhabit the hills of Wales, today's Welsh Mountain Ponies are more likely to be found navigating driving courses or sailing over hunter courses with a young child in the saddle. It has a complex personality that's equal parts clever and kind, and while it has long been hailed as an ideal child's pony, it is also extremely popular as a driving pony for adults.

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

Welsh Ponies (Section B) epitomize a fine children's pony, and are often seen in the show ring.

SECTION B: THE WELSH PONY

Up to 14.2 hands in the U.S.

Breeders in Wales recognized the need for a larger pony with the same qualities as the Mountain Pony. During the first half of the 20th century, they developed Section B of the studbook.

Early breeders made selective crosses of registered Welsh Mountain Ponies with Arabians, Thoroughbreds and Welsh Cobs to introduce additional height while retaining the character and type for which the Welsh are revered. (All four sections of the studbook have been closed to outside blood for generations.) With its additional height, it is often viewed as the perfect "next pony" for a child who has outgrown a Section A.

Today's Section B ponies are well-known as outstanding performance ponies, and their versatility allows them to be competitive in a wide range of disciplines, making them the most popular section in the United States.

SECTION C: THE WELSH PONY OF COB TYPE

Up to 13.2 hands in the U.S.

The Welsh Pony of Cob Type, or Section C, is smaller than the Welsh Cob, yet retains the same characteristics of substance and strength. But the Section C also exhibits a great deal of pony quality, especially in the face, which reflects the influence of the Welsh Mountain Pony.

Section C's, while still somewhat rare in the United States (less than 20 Section C foals are registered in the United States each year), are well-suited to driving, jumping and a host of other disciplines. And even though Section C's are similar in height to many Section B's, they are quite different in type; Section C's actually share more characteristics with Section A's.

SECTION D: THE WELSH COB

Over 13.2 hands in the U.S.

Section D Welsh Cobs are massive, powerful animals with the skill and stamina to excel in many pursuits, coupled with impressive beauty and athleticism.

One glimpse of the Welsh Cob in action easily demonstrates why it is such a popular choice for dressage, and its movement, strength and temperament make it an ideal choice for driving as well. But it's the unique temperament of the Welsh Cob—curious, kind and trainable—that attracts some of its most devoted enthusiasts.

Whether an adult's driving horse or a child's best friend, these ponies bring endless joy and delight to the equestrians they impact. HI

NIGEL BAKER/ADOBE STOCK

Welsh Cobs (Section D) should display "as much substance as possible."

For one to fly,
one needs only
to take the reins.
– Melissa James

ANDALUSIAN. PHOTO BY CHRISTIANE SLAWIK

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